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Pastoral work in country districts : lectures delivered in the divinity school

Three very striking addresses were given at St. Paul's Cathedral on Monday by the Bishop of Liverpool to the clergy in the Archdeaconry of Middlesex, on the occasion of a Quiet Day, which began with an early celebration of the Holy Communion, at which the Bishop of London was celebrant.

At the first general gathering the Bishop of Liverpool dealt with the work of a clergyman as priest, when he was most emphatic in his insistence on the necessity of holiness on the part of one who represents God to man and man to God. Some of the chief hindrances to saintliness are, in his opinion, parochialism, which narrows a man's outlook as well as his heart; professionalism, which breeds formality and takes the very heart out of worship; partisanship, which embitters the heart and kills religion; and pressure of work, which curtails the time for Bible reading and prayer, and robs a man's duty of its life, and his message of its ring.

The Bishop's second address was upon the clergyman as prophet—a prophet possessing the heavenly vision and interpreting God to his own generation. No printed page, said he, however excellent its matter, will ever take the place of the word preached. The true prophet's message must be timely, suited to the age in which he lives, meeting its peculiar needs, difficulties, problems, temptations. It must be *fresh*, "all dipt and seasoned," as George Herbert said. Whilst the Church is grateful for the priceless treasures bequeathed to her by the fathers, reformers, puritans, and Caroline divines, and the great preachers of the nineteenth century, she requires from the prophet of the twentieth century a distinctive and discriminating message for the particular age in which he lives. He must therefore be a diligent and critical student of the Scriptures; he must study them devotionally, in order to feed his own soul; and he must study them homiletically, remembering the needs of his people.

In his concluding address Doctor Chavasse drew an admirable picture of the clergyman as pastor, enumerating the qualifications necessary to success, as sympathy, self-effacement, and self-sacrifice. With regard to self-effacement, the true pastor will hold up the lantern and be content to be lost in the shadow; would unfurl the standard of the cross and be willing to be hidden by its thorns. Like the Divine Shepherd, he will seek until he finds, undeterred by fear of infection or by horror of filth, ready, if need be, to lay down his life for the sheep. The priest may be reverenced, the prophet admired, but the pastor's guerdon is love.

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PASTORAL WORK
IN COUNTRY DISTRICTS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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PASTORAL WORK IN COUNTRY DISTRICTS

LECTURES DELIVERED IN THE DIVINITY SCHOOL AT CAMBRIDGE, LENT, 1905

BY

V. S. S. COLES, M.A.

PRINCIPAL OF THE PUSEY HOUSE, OXFORD

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PASTORAL WORK IN COUNTRY DISTRICTS

I

MISSIONARY AND PASTOR

MY privilege of speaking in this place is very great. For twenty years I have known at Oxford what an opportunity is open to a teacher, who though he may be so made that the knowledge of books is not easily held in his mind, and so far to blame that in his younger days he took little pains to mend the defect, has yet not been allowed to lose the gift of faith, or to be wholly blind to what God has been doing about his path; and the generous invitation which brings me here sets me free to say, "What I have, I give." Generous it certainly is, for it must be well known that part of what I have, coming from the Pusey House, is a deep conviction of the divine character of the Oxford Revival, springing as it does (it is not ended yet!) from the appeal to the Church undivided, and aiming, as it always must, at the

Church reunited. There is, indeed, a deeper possession which we all have in common—the conviction of faith in our Incarnate Lord. This is the best of the things which any man has, so that he can give them to others. But also, I ought to add that I am fain to use one other thing which has been given me—a life-long tie with village people in the West of England, among whom I was born and brought up, and served them for twelve years, and love them better than Oxford or Cambridge, for their own sake, and the good hand of God upon them.

So it is of Pastoral Work that I am to speak, and specially pastoral work in English country life.

And I begin by saying that, strictly speaking, pastoral work is only one part—the greater and higher part no doubt, but yet only one part of that for which we are called. There is the other great work of the missionary, besides that of the pastor.

The Holy Scriptures, while they show us that it is the will and plan of God to work on men by men, give us two pictures of the agent called and sent to this work: the picture of the Fisherman and the picture of the Shepherd.

No doubt the Shepherd's office is the higher, for our Lord Himself bears it. He is the Good Shepherd, the Shepherd Who goes after the lost

sheep, and it is His own example that He sets forth when He says: "Be the shepherd of My sheep," while it is the disciples, and not, by that name, the Lord Himself, who are to be fishers of men. But the lower work is the preparation for the higher, and indeed goes along with it, ever ready to supply need and amend defect; the two offices are closely interwoven; marks of each are found in the other. Nevertheless, it is by seeing the distinction between them that we can best learn what is common to both.

In every Christian country the missionary has come first. St. Aidan and St. Augustine were to us what Bishop Hannington and Bishop Smythies have lately been to Uganda and Central Africa. In that first stage the leader is prominent. The subordinate pastor has not yet his local limits and his appointed flock; it is war time, and every officer is at his general's disposal; they are seizing, buying their opportunities; taking keen advantage of every right moment, and yet daring to act at what, but for utter need, would be the wrong moment; ready for everything, in that "rare" good sense which the Lexicon allows to St. Paul's πανοῦργος, catching with guile, catching alive for repentance and knowledge and recovery the fish hidden in the wide waters, that they may be brought to the fire of the Lord. Very different is all this from the ideal of the Shepherd—calm,

wise, trusted, habitually followed, known and knowing, even as the Father knoweth the Son and the Son knoweth the Father.

The distinction is high, but it is seen in the very beginnings of service. The touch of glory is on him who, even in his youth, must speak in the street for his Lord; perhaps the higher honour is to him who is never missed from his place in the Sunday-school. While the street preacher is kindled by the thought that to every soul created by God the message is due of his Maker's redeeming love, the school teacher feels deep awe if he has seen that he is the guardian of the elect, ministering with angels to the heirs of salvation.

Asking again that you will not suppose that I think the distinction is sharp and defined in practice, I think I can best arrange what I have to offer by considering the two great lines of work, first that of the missionary, and then that of the pastor.

The point at which the first ends and the second begins is Baptism, or, in the case of many who have been baptized but are living far from God, the claim of baptism by living faith and repentance. Nothing is more important than to remember the need of this claim, and to set it before the people in our regular teaching. If we wait to mention it till it comes in answer to an objection

its force is lost, and our candour may be suspected. It is no mere excuse, but a genuine cause of stumbling, that thousands of baptized and confirmed people, even a large number who have been admitted to Holy Communion, should be living lives in which it is impossible to recognize the love of God and man as a true and effectual motive. A simple illustration may serve to remove the offence. If I refuse to open a letter which the postman has left for me containing a thousand pounds, I may die of want. Baptism and Confirmation bring the letter; conversion of heart opens and uses its contents.

Taking baptism, then, to mean either adult baptism, or the point at which one baptized in infancy learns to say, "I am Thine: O save me," we may enumerate the points by which the messenger of our Lord lays siege to the fortress of man's life. We have armed forces without, and friends, more or less open or secret, within. Three of these internal allies are never absent, and a fourth is also there, though sometimes feeble and decrepit. Sorrow is there, and Joy; Conscience also is there; and issuing partly from conscience, partly surviving happier though perhaps forgotten days, there is Traditional Religiousness, reverence for holy names and days and usages, often, as it were, the altar to the unknown God.

Sorrow and joy are the times when, or the powers

through which, the postern gate is open, and a soldier from the army of the Cross can get access, more or less direct, to conscience, the secret witness for his King. Imprisoned, silenced—drugged, it may be and forced to utter falsehood in a degraded trance,—Conscience, the prophet of God, still lives, a light in a dark place, and yet the very life of the Eternal Word; and to the prophet Conscience comes, when Joy or Sorrow open the way, the prophet from without, who is also the evangelist. Their meeting is the meeting of the streams that come from the throne, for the Spirit is with them both. The captive, down-trodden conscience wakes and rises at the voice of the messenger; the heart of the messenger is made glad by the instinctive touch of fellowship and recognition; "When the voice of thy salutation came into my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy."

I hope to speak more fully of the Order for the Visitation of the Sick; but let me remind you at once of the words about joy and sorrow with which the exhortation begins: "Dearly beloved, know this, that almighty God is the Lord of life and death, and of all things to them pertaining, as youth, strength, health (these are characteristic sources and conditions of joy), age, weakness, and sickness (characteristic conditions of sorrow)." It is with the latter group that the visitation is chiefly

concerned, for indeed it is better to go into the house of mourning; nevertheless, joy is older than sorrow, and will survive it for the children of God.

Rejoicing with them that do rejoice, alliance with youth, strength, and health, is the method of our day, and our business is to see that it is made to serve as truly for the conversion of souls as the more old-fashioned and universal culture of age, weakness, and sickness—the weeping with them that weep. When I was a boy, my father—a most faithful country parson—dined at the club-feast, but went away after dinner, that he might not see the drunkenness which he could not hinder. About thirty years ago I found myself passing through a Midland town where the whole people where alive and at their keenest for the annual fair. I knew that the vicar was one of the best friends of my undergraduate days, but I found that he had, according to his usual custom, left the parish for the fair day. A step in the right direction was found in the practice of another notable parish priest, who walked right round his market town on the fair day at about ten o'clock in the evening, in his unwonted cassock, and with a stout stick, as well as a menacing eye-glass. But you will agree, I think, that a better step is made possible by improved manners and better amusements. In most villages I think it is now

possible to enter frankly into the whole pleasure of the club-feast, still more into that of the week-day harvest festival. The rules of the country benefit societies usually require that the members shall attend divine service on the feast day, and in many places the parson has a rare opportunity of speaking to almost all his men, including many who are seldom at church on any other day, partly dissenters, partly the careless or vicious. The opportunity is richer, if by very careful and tactful arrangement, the service can be brought early in the forenoon, before there has been treating at many farms. The offer of a cup of coffee at the rectory, when the band leads up the procession to fetch the parson, may save a good deal of drink. The arrangement of the service in church is worth any amount of pains. It must be special; the men quite understand if trouble has not been spared. It must be familiar; all must be able to join in it; there ought to be a sense of ease and home-coming, which is greatly injured by needless announcements, made as to strangers; above all, it must be solemn and devout. If the clergy and choir are waiting in their places when the men come in, the "Old Hundredth" can at once be sung, and the familiar opening of the Sunday morning service will touch chords of memory and bind the weakest with the strongest spirit. On no account let us omit the

exhortation; this is the very moment when the purposes of divine service may be most fitly rehearsed. On no account let us say it on A or even on G, but in a subdued but audible natural voice. I can imagine that in the musical north, the Ely Confession, with its lovely cadences, reverently sung, might be the best vehicle for the penitence of the fathers and sons of the whole parish. It would not be so in the West of England. There, and I suspect in most places, a somewhat low recitation, with no predominating voice, best serves our need. The Psalm is a problem, for it is flat to recite it alternately, and unless it is well-known, we shall hardly get it sung by all. But, by the second or third year, it will be well known, with its tuneful and alluring chant, and in the first year we shall have prepared three or four voices besides the choir, and persuaded their owners to sit at the west end of the church.

Perhaps in years to come we may choose for the club service the Psalms of the Third Hour ("Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes"), part of which the children may have used each morning at School Prayers. After the lesson, carefully chosen and most carefully (and prayerfully) read, no organist shall be allowed to set a hard service or a difficult chant for the *Te Deum*, and when hearts have been therein

lifted and the familiar Creed said like the Confession, there will, by God's blessing, be a wave of worship swelling in the power of the unseen Fountain that springs to everlasting life. When that is so, the parson can venture a little; if the versicles are usually sung, they may be sung to-day; his selection of Collects may include some of the most heavenly, and he may dare to make his men help him before he preaches, for the habit of prayer is awaking in them now, with the *Veni sancte spiritus*.

In the pulpit he is the herald of the hallowing of human joy. Goodfellowship, love of home, the love of man and maid out of which the holy home shall grow, the comfort and relief of the sick, which is the glory of the benefit society, the reconciliations of quarrels and the ending of coolnesses for which many are ready to-day; these are some of the treasures close to his hand, and these he will cleanse and polish and exhibit in the full sunlight of Incarnate Love.

You observe that we are not hampered by any considerations about Matins; that was said hours ago, when a few of the most devout were quietly preparing, in a short interval between the pealing bells, to seek God's blessing on the mission of joy by the pleading of the finished sacrifice.

Permission for the midday service, strictly according to the Act of Uniformity Amendment Act,

including the general thanksgiving after the sermon, was obtained long ago from the Bishop, when, once for all, we obtained his releasing sanction on plans to bring something of angel and saint feast days into the Sundays following, and generally to adapt what is old to new needs. The club service, though a more delicate matter, just because it is a signal opportunity, serves as pattern for the harvest service, and perhaps for the Rogation procession on Rogation Sunday afternoon, from the church to each inviting farm in annual turn.

Forgive me, if I have broken loose—partly by memory, partly in aspirations half-fulfilled—concerning the great matter of the missionary consecration of joy. The club service may stand as a symbol of much besides. Ranging with it is the adornment of the village wedding—not altogether a simple matter. For excessive drink—the enemy of country life—may be lying in wait for us here, and the universal carnal foe, worse than drink, spreads its snares for our young people, and seeks to entangle the pastor's feet also, as he treads his difficult way on the stepping-stones of sympathy in the miry paths of discipline.

Discipline we must aim at. If we seek to make our Church life joyous, because it is human and divine, we must witness against the sin that drags down poor human nature from the divine fellow-

ship. We must be true to the law of God, but again, we must not fall into unbalanced exaggeration, as if the sin that comes before our eyes, and perplexes our action, were always the worst form of sin. And here it is time to say what I shall have to say, or at least ask you to bear in mind with me, many times in these lectures, that you cannot treat villages as if they were all alike. Generalizations, such as those from which calculations are gained for sanitary work, and secular and undenominational education, are always dangerous in religion, but to rely on them for our ideas about English rural life, is to make ourselves sure of mistake. It has been well said that two neighbouring English villages may be as different in character and circumstances as Birmingham and Oxford. Much more is it true that the factory village differs from the farm village, the village of prehistoric antiquity from the village that grows up round a railway, the village round the great house from the village cut up into small holdings, the village that has degenerated for perhaps centuries, from the village where a few holy mothers, or perhaps a few men, perhaps only one holy man, have made all the difference.

About forty years, ago I spent a Sunday in a South Yorkshire factory town, where I was told that no factory hands married until the wife was about to be a mother. Probably there have

been farm parishes where things have been nearly as bad. Rare indeed is the village where this trouble is absent. We do not doubt that for those of our own flocks who have come to know, as we know it, the law of God, such sin unrepented of must part them, as surely as it would part ourselves, from His love. We do not doubt that, wherever our work lies, we must take our share in the painful and difficult work of training a better public opinion on the matter. But we do well to remember that the present public opinion which tolerates sin before marriage, to an extent which allows us to hope that, in the case of the ignorant, the wilfulness of the sin may be greatly lessened, is not altogether without cause.

Unconsciously our people retain impressions which were formed under a marriage law different from ours. In medieval Christendom the Church law was that which is still the civil law of Scotland. Consent to perpetual union before witnesses, followed by married life, was a good marriage. It was the English Civil Lawyers, who, before the sixteenth century, took the severer line, which was also propounded by the Council of Trent, and has partly been introduced into Roman Catholic Europe, by which the witness to consent must be the Church. The teaching of the medieval Church would have been that if a young couple, who were intending to seek the benediction of

the priest, consented then and there, to take each other for life before their parents in private, they would be already man and wife.

Again, as duty compels us to become more conversant with the "depths of Satan," we must be aware that ante-nuptial sin is very far from being the worst form of carnal evil with which the Church has to contend: the case in which such sin is known may well be less guilty than many cases in which it is sinfully concealed.

These things must not be forgotten, but none the less—rather even the more—we must fight against the opinion, often so strong, which treats sin in the betrothed as of no account.

In view of this duty, it seems obvious that we should try to make a difference between what we soon come to think of as the "good marriage" and the "bad marriage." For the one, the bells, the choir, the trimmed chancel, the white frontal, the hymns and chants; for the other, the bare appointed service, without music or ornament. Experience shows, however, that this plan does not work without friction. Inquisitorial we cannot be, and how are we to know how to make distinctions? Though village public opinion is not severe in the matter, village interest is keen, especially when it is known that a high standard is being aimed at; and it is probably safe to say that some matron will make it her business to see

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that what is floating about the parish shall reach the parson's ears. When he is informed of the scandal by a responsible person, it will be proper for him to ask the bridegroom if it is true, and public opinion will not support the bridegroom in a false denial.

Whatever difficulties there may be in making the distinction, there is no difficulty in the effort to hallow human joy by the lifting and adorning of marriage which is really holy. Those who are not used to country ways will be surprised to find that the parents do not come to the wedding. The father's place, among the labouring people, is usually taken by another; the mother is busy at home with her preparations for the wedding feast. Nor does the bridegroom arrive before the bride. They will come together attended by their young friends, and the priest should be ready for them. If a hymn is begun as soon as they appear, their self-consciousness will be greatly relieved. Let us be sure that if the bridegroom or the best man laughs, or if the maidens titter, it is far more probably nervousness than irreverence which causes the breakdown. Here, and at all times when laughter breaks out unsuitably, as very often at the first meeting of a Confirmation class, it should certainly be treated with sympathy as an infirmity, not with rebuke as a fault. The same sympathy must be shown through the whole

service. The priest is not surprised if he has to tell the bride to take off her glove, and to guide both bride and bridegroom through the joining and loosing and rejoining of hands. These things seem small, but they represent what is very great, the endeavour to make the village people feel that they are not strangers in church, and that the parson is not merely an official, but their friend, servant, father, desiring to make all things easy for them, *in conspectu Dei.*

The annual festival and the marriage are obviously representative times of joy, but the readiness to enter into the pleasures and happiness of the people must never be wanting to the parson. He ought to know who is to be congratulated and who is to be condoled with after a cricket match; he ought at least to be ready to hear, over and over again, the story of the failure of crops, the want of rain, the anxieties about the price of live stock, and the like. When the lad or maiden, grown out of knowledge, comes home from trade or service—specially from the King's service—the parson will manage to meet the boy with his proud mother, or the young woman with her train of admiring younger sisters, in the churchyard, or in the meadows.

It is not only that fellowship in joy is a most divine thing, but that it opens the door of opportunity, even perhaps the door of faith. As

evening falls over the club or harvest home field, the parson's presence, while it gives sanction to the ordered dance, and draws the line at rough unseemly games, is ready for many a talk on deep things and of lasting value. Few men are likely to be fully prepared for the difficulty of getting private talks with their people in the country, especially with the men. I remember the surprise of a young friend of mine, in temporary charge of a parish, at finding that an elderly labourer was not willing to come and speak to him in the vestry after the Sunday morning service. Such an appointment would have suited a man in his North London parish, for the ocean of human life is a secure hiding-place, like the great congregation at St. Paul's; but if the labourer had been seen making his way to the vestry on a Sunday morning, he would have been the "parish talk" for a week at least. In fact, the first start towards being a communicant for that particular man, was made in a talk behind the Harvest-Home tent during the dancing. I could name a man who had the talk he wanted, lifted a couple of feet above the parson, as he stood on the ladder, with the hook in his hand, pruning a vine.

To finish this matter of opportunities with men. A sick-bed is the best, but they will not all break their legs. To meet them in the lanes or fields

coming back from work, especially in the dark, is often a prime chance; a drive with a man in a cart, is not bad; to find your friend under a hedge eating his dinner alone may (with care) be an opportunity. Certainly it is worth while to find reasons for being about the skirts of the village in roads and footpaths, about the time men come home. But chance is not the word to use. If we have prayed for them, they are brought by the angels, in ways that lift our hearts and strengthen our faith. Only we must know what to say when the moment comes. And of that I will try to speak when I have completed the opportunities of joy with those of sorrow.

In a manner, the opportunities of sorrow are much easier, at least with the poor. It is not only that the parson is conventionally expected in the sick-room along with the doctor, but that nearly every one is expected. Doctor and priest alike are at their wits' end how to clear the small malodorous place of neighbours of all kinds. The sanitary and therapeutic aspects of the question had better be left to the doctor, or the squire's ladies. We, who have to care for the soul, had better not be handicapped by that quarrel, and rectory ladies must be entreated not so to involve us. In serious cases of sickness, we must break up our morning, and be with the patient before the visitors have arrived. In very critical moments we must plainly

ask to be left alone with the sick. Soon after I had been ordained priest, I was sent for in the night, to a dying woman who bore a very bad character, in a hovel in my district in a market town. I found two women of similar repute with her, and that she was very near her end. In their presence I told her about repentance, and then about confession. She said at once that she wished to make her confession. I turned to the women and said, "You hear what she says. What shall we do?" They both went out of the ground-floor room and remained in the rain, which was falling, while I did my best for her. She passed away, I think, before the morning, and so it did not greatly matter that neither she nor I thought of her ungodly husband, who heard all from his bed upstairs, and told the neighbours he would have never lived with her again.

One way or another, our object is to get face to face with the conscience of the sick. But that I leave for a later lecture.

Sickness is not the only form of sorrow. Troubles about money, and troubles about the wrongdoing of their kin, or their neighbours, open the hearts of village folk. The parson's difficulty will be that, in these troubles, he is so often quite unable to do what is asked of him. He in many cases cannot give or lend money, and he cannot entirely take the side of the parishioner

who complains to him. What he can give is time, attention, patience. And these are not wasted. Patient listening is the necessary way to good advice. Country people must tell their tale in their own way, often a very discursive way. The parson must listen for the interest of the speaker's soul, as in the "Mill on the Floss" Wakem, the hard attorney, listens for his own interest to Mrs. Tulliver's long and feeble lamentation, extracting gradually the essence of the matter. Those who have not lived in the country find it hard to understand that village folk cannot be hurried. Their minds move slowly; expression is difficult to them, especially when they are laying aside their wonted dialect and idiom for the language of another class. Experience has taught them to be on their guard, and not to part easily with the secrets which are often their one advantage. The parson belongs to the same formidable class as the policeman, the relieving officer, and the agent. It might be a good lesson for a beginner in village pastoral work to observe in the shops and booths of a market town the shrewd, keen deliberation that is bestowed on purchases and bargains. He must, at the very least, be as patient as the shopman who folds and unfolds his goods on the counter, or the cattle-dealer, who after exposing his stock to long and critical contemplation, goes slowly into the inn, and concludes the bargain over a friendly

glass. Perhaps a better illustration of the right frame of mind is to be found in our primary thought that the missionary is a fisherman. Patiently he must cast his net again and again; patiently he must wait for the single fish for which he throws the line.

The reticence and reserve of the poor are connected with very noble instincts of self-respect and a sense of what is due to others, but they are also partly caused by the Englishman's morbid dread of unreality, and his dislike of showing his deepest feelings. When at last the veil is lifted, and the simple heart is showing us the wound to be healed, or the knot to be untied, the sense of deliverance changes the whole manner of the man; his hand is raised with a gesture of relief; perhaps the tears are in his eyes. Thus joy and sorrow open for us our avenues to conscience.

We learn how much patience and patient expenditure of time have to do with sympathy, when we see what happens in a village house of mourning. The stillness of the death-chamber pervades the whole house. As far as the necessities of food and orderliness permit, work and working dress is laid aside; after a visit to the death-chamber the visitor sits silent and passive in the parlour. Few words are spoken, but much kindness is felt, much comfort given. Our visits will not be so long as these, but they partake of the same character.

And, in our case, there are two elements of relief, to which the background of stillness is a real help—there is reading, and there is prayer. The large Bible is very likely lying ready on the table, and an offer to read from it will be a welcome offer. The act of reading is interpretative, consolatory; the word of comment rises naturally to our lips; by way of comment or exposition we can venture on sacred hints of resignation, self-examination, self-improvement; suggestions of the half-revealed secrets of the world unseen; what we can do for the departed, what they can do for us. Thus the heavy atmosphere of mere sorrow is cleared by hope, and the form of Christ is seen once more on the waters; thoughts take shape, needs are felt, and when we kneel down, we are not at a loss for petitions.

Shall I venture here at once to speak of the value of such unprepared petitions? No one could blame them in such a setting as that of the son's prayers with his mother in the story of the lives of Catherine and Craufurd Tait. If anyone prefers to open his Prayer Book and show how he can find a Collect suited to every need, I will not dispute with him; but I must bear witness to the value of the freedom to kneel down, and ask our Lord to help us to pray, and to hear our prayer, and then to lay before Him the things which have been spoken of, and seek His help for

the doing of His will through our submitted and guided desires. It is not only in the house of mourning, but in every place, that such access to the Father is to be secured. Many a one longing for high things cannot be warm alone in prayer, and sometimes the voice of another—even specially of another to whom the burden is less pressing—is what the stricken soul chiefly needs.

But it is time to consider the aim which, through sympathy with joy and sorrow alike, we must have in view. It is simply to bring every man into a right relation to our Lord Jesus Christ. That is, in idea, a relation of faith, hope, and love. Practically, faith is preceded by interest and seeking: love involves penitence. And again, this relation is brought about by the actual living operation of the Holy Spirit, succeeding to the work of Christ set before us in the gospels, and using the same means of contact, sympathy, and teaching which are found in the gospels. To put it, then, in another form, what we are normally to aim at is a good communion. That means a communion rightly prepared for in the past, and such as will result in a right use of the creatures of God in the future. As the sculptor saw the angel in the block of marble, I ought to see in each of my fellow-creatures a saint, loving God above all things, loving man for His sake, using all things for God, clothed in white and crowned

with gold. This is the primary idea, concerning all; but even our Lord Himself said that none could come to Him unless they were drawn by the Father, or, from the other side, had heard and learned of the Father. The universality of the offer, and the uncertainty of its acceptance in each single instance,—these are the conditions of our work; and it is by them that we bear the character of the fisherman, casting his net in patience, keen anticipation, eager hope, torturing uncertainty. And yet it is not torture or torment, for we do but wait on the Father's will.

The normal aim gives definiteness to our efforts, and the modifications, allowances, abatements,—these come after. The good communion, which is the normal aim, implies, as has been said, right preparation, and right results. To draw these out in detail is a work which each of us must do for himself, in loyalty to his own convictions; but it will be more or less on the lines of the following questions:—

Does the man believe?

Is he baptized?

Is he confirmed?

Is he a communicant?

Is his communion made with living faith and true repentance?

If not, is it because of some definite known sin?

Or by neglect of some equally known duty?

Does he need, to bring him rightly to communion, to make a special confession of his sins, and to receive the benefit of absolution?

Is he in charity with all men?

Does he seek to advance in the love of God through keeping the commandments and feeding on His word?

Does he seek to advance in the love of man through intercession for all, and the acceptance of the calls which arise out of intercession, to service and charity?

You observe that these questions are put in the third person, "Does he?" not in the second, "Do you?" It is of ourselves that we must ask these questions about those with whom we deal, and of Him Who is our new and better self, as our intercourse with men and women gives us opportunities for finding the replies. And observe again that the list of questions does not include, "When were you last in Church?" Much less should we wish to make that the first question.

Nor is it a bare answer as to the fact that we chiefly need. The man may be unconfirmed, and, at this moment, confirmation may have nothing to do with his highest interests, because the preventing grace of God has not yet brought the conviction that he ought to be confirmed before his conscience. The series of questions represents a

hidden channel; what we need to ascertain is the point in the channel which the water has already reached. It may be before any one of these questions that the flow of grace is stopped by a barrier, and we cannot tell where the stoppage is. One thing we know for certain, that where God is calling a man to change, He will solicit the man's will to make the change. Further, we may be sure that wherever the will is moved by God, the power to obey is increased by prayer. Lastly, we may be sure that where the will and truth of God, as declared in Scripture, and accepted by the Church, are not known, the true heart will be aware that it ought to seek and find. So, in all men, we may try to elicit these three things: obedience to known truth, prayer to God, and interest in His revelation, obedience that will act, prayer that will trust, interest that will seek.

So I have tried to speak of the three allies of the messenger of God—joy, sorrow, and conscience. I mentioned another, traditional religiousness. This is a minimising phrase. Where true faith has been duly taught, there will be much more than mere religiousness. But with a large number of our people, the knowledge of the Christian religion is dim, and disproportionate. It is our wisdom to ascertain, as far as we can, what traditional convictions are already in the

heart which we are laying siege to. With old-fashioned people, notably in the country, probably also in the town, there are three great convictions to which we may appeal—belief in God, belief in the Bible, belief in the Sabbath. In many places there are two others, the theoretical acceptance of the duty of going to Church, and, most blessed and potent of all, where it is real, belief in Christ as a Saviour. This last is the special heritage of those districts where early Methodist teaching sowed a good seed. Besides these convictions, more or less on our side, there are others with which we have to contend. The belief in the Bible will need to be recast if a rude awakening is not to ensue; if we are to let no man judge us in respect of a Sabbath, a more Christian view of the Lord's Day must be gently substituted for the prevailing Judaic tradition; but, most of all, we must contend with the false tradition, which makes salvation depend upon a personal assurance. Not only does this perversion of the blessed truth that the gift of assurance may be sought for and enjoyed, make sad tender and faithful hearts, but in many cases it gives a false consolation, disjoined as it is from love and obedience. Our efforts to deal rightly with these circumstances will meet us again when we are considering the Visitation Order. At present I must be satisfied with having tried to lay before you

some suggestions as to the missionary duty of the country pastor, who works through sympathy with joy and sorrow to present his people complete in Jesus Christ.

II

THE LIFE OF THE PRIEST

FAITH

IT may be that I seemed ignorant or careless in speaking last week of our Work before I had tried to speak of our Life. You may have been inclined to remind me that the unclean lips were cleansed before the call was given, and that the command, "Go, work to-day in the vineyard," was given to one who could, in some sense, be addressed as a son. My defence is that it is of the Work that I am told to speak, and the need of considering the Life comes home to us more strongly when we see that it is the condition of faithful and effectual work. If we are not to be put to shame on every tenth morning of the month by the terrible question, "Why dost thou preach my laws, and takest my covenant in thy mouth?" we must so order our conversation right, as to see for ourselves first, and then for others, the salvation of God. I do not forget that our unworthiness hinders not the effect of sacraments; you might pour the baptismal water from a vessel marked

with words of blasphemy; but we are not looking to the merciful exception, rather it is the glorious rule, the eternal purpose that we have to consider; ἔδει, ἔπρεπεν, these are the words that give the tone to our inquiry.

The preacher of faith and holiness must himself believe and be holy. He cannot understand what faith and holiness are unless he is claiming them as a child of God in Christ; every advance in faith and holiness leads him to greater fitness for his work. That faith is the true path to holiness you will not, I think, dispute: if any man disputes, at least the time is not come when he can without rebuke and shame utter the Creeds, as one who has with open eyes taken them upon himself, and yet does not believe them. The protest of Professor Sidgwick against the attempt to justify clerical indifference to faith remains in force.

There have been times, there are places, where it may be assumed that acceptance of the Christian revelation is habitual to all. Does it seem to you a loss that this assumption cannot be made to-day in England? It would be rash to expose an unquestioning people to doubt, but probably the temptation to doubt exists secretly in many minds, even where avowal of it would require unusual courage; and there is something to be thankful for in that amongst ourselves every relation to revealed religion can be freely avowed. Less and

less, as your experience grows, will you be able to take it for granted that your parishioners possess unshaken faith. The difference between town and country in this respect is narrower than it was in my youth; perhaps, when you are old, it will have disappeared.

I wish, then, to propose the question, "Why are we Christians?" or, to put it in another form, "Why am I certain that the Christian religion is true?" To the first followers of our Lord, at any rate, the second of these questions would not imply a step beyond the first. To them a Christian was one who was certain of what Christ had taught him. "We know and believe"; "We have seen and bear witness"; "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater"; "Him Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare we unto you"; "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard"—such are the words which spring from spiritual inheritance, ours as well as theirs.

Before I ask you to give yourselves the right answer to the question, "Why am I a Christian?" I will venture to give you a case which I fear is typical. A man of nine-and-twenty has given up Holy Communion because he has lost the sense of peaceful assurance that Christianity is true. You ask him if he was ever sure of it in the past; in particular, what was his relation to the Christian Creed at the time of his confirmation? Had these

present difficulties arisen then? Yes, he tells you, I knew something of them, and I spoke about them to your good friend who presented me for confirmation. He met me with the argument *ad verecundiam:* "Don't you know that numbers of good and learned men have given their lives to the study of these matters, and are quite sure of the result? Will you set your opinion against theirs?" He tells you that this was enough for him at fourteen, but that it will not do for him at nine-and-twenty. He has come to see that the same words might be used by many who do not accept the Creed — Unitarians, Mohammedans, Agnostics. The conclusions drawn from the survey of the past, from the search into the nature of man, seem to differ not in proportion to men's goodness, but in relation to their circumstances; and so certainty is far from him; probability cannot be attained by any process for which he has leisure and qualifications. He must remain friendly, tolerant, but unconvinced. Communion, involving as it does the honest recitation of the Nicene Creed, is at present impossible for him. What shall we say to him?

We can, at any rate, lend him a book. Both our Universities have in these last few years produced works bearing evidence of first-rate ability and unusual industry, and enshrining the firm witness of their distinguished authors to the

truth of Christianity. But it is not inconceivable that he may plead inability to study the learned and lofty lectures which we recommend. He is very busy, worn out in the evening, tired even on Sunday, rather inclined to plead that, as he never found abstract study congenial, it has now become almost impossible to him. 'And besides,' he adds, 'if I were able to gain what you think I need from difficult study, such a remedy would be quite impossible for others who have lost their faith, men of no education, no power of sifting evidence, hardly able to read. Is not Christianity a religion for all? Are not the poor its best loved children? Has not St. Paul said something about "not many wise, not many well born"?' If the time has come when he can examine for himself, and find that his mature intellect leads him the same way as his early modesty, he must still use the old argument *ad verecundiam* to others, and it is this argument that he has learned to distrust. In view of the varying convictions of men, he cannot press it with a clear conscience.

The truth is, we must go back upon the method of his old friend and teacher. We must appeal to something deeper, wider, more universal, more essentially human, and at the same time more essentially divine than the process of intellectual inference. We must ask ourselves how the first

Christians, the disciples in Jerusalem and Galilee, attained to their conviction, and we recollect the little group of men and women, bound so closely and naturally to each other, because of the unique tie which bound them to our Lord. He had not argued with them; the testimony of the Old Testament had not gone very far; the witness of men and miracles—in a true sense the witness of our Lord Himself, as He stood before them in His prophetic Manhood—all these fell short of the truly constraining cause of faith, the witness of the Father. It was the Lord's own word, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven." And His words are taken up by St. Paul and St. John: "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that of yourselves; it is the gift of God." "He hath given us of His Spirit, and we have beheld and bear witness that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

Before confirmation, along with a certain appeal to modesty on behalf of a candid and teachable spirit, there should have been a stronger appeal to the conviction ready to spring into glowing light at the touch of the Gospel message, to the dormant divine gift of faith.

This surely is the word we need—*the gift of faith.* If we are asked why we are Christians, our reply must be, 'He Who called me into being

has made me sure that Jesus, of Whom I read in the Gospels, Whom I find to be the Hope of Christendom, Whom countless men and women are conscious of seeking and finding by the help of the Spirit, and pre-eminently in the Sacrament, is His coequal Son.'

This conviction is no narrow idiosyncrasy; it does not make a man eccentric. It is not to be dismissed as many would dismiss the assertion that a spirit had been seen or a voice from heaven heard. It is the door which admits us into the most glorious fellowship that the world has ever seen, into a unique conception of the union between God and man, different in kind from anything which has been believed of the Buddha, of Mohammed, of the best-loved and worshipped of created masters.

I do not forget that this simple account of faith presupposes a certain belief in God. If a man attaches no idea to that great word, it may mean nothing to him to declare "Christus est Deus," but St. Paul encourages us to look for a dim knowledge of our Maker, the γνῶστον τοῦ θεου, in all men, and we are not disappointed. Doubtless the theism may be dim, may be little more than an hypothesis, until the light of faith in Christ has dawned on the soul, but the dim notion will be sufficient to supply a frame to the imagination, and the Divine gift will first present Jesus

Christ as alone and supreme, and then will discover His Sonship along with His Divinity, and declare Him as the revealing Word of the Father, the manifestation of the mutual love which has ever been the chief characteristic of living unity. It is the man who knows the gift of faith in himself, who can look for it, and challenge its as yet unrealized presence in his brother men.

It will be seen that this view of the gift of faith is only possible to those who have found the Incarnate Son of God to be the true centre of our religion. On the proposition, "Christ is God," the whole Catholic Faith can be built up. It is Christ Who reveals the Father, gives the Spirit, institutes the Sacraments, embodies the Church, co-ordinates the Scriptures, lifts morality, explains philosophy, transfigures duty, and ennobles life. It is His Name, through faith in His Name, that gives power everywhere to Apostolic teaching, and strength to our crippled human nature.

As we bring before ourselves the clear picture of the gift of faith, one thing alone may perhaps rightly alarm us—the simplicity of the idea. Are we making faith too easy? Must we not toil more, face more tribulation, as we enter into the Kingdom of God? Is that a right simplicity which seems to put aside the use of reason, and the discipline of thought and inquiry?

It must be conceded that, at first sight, this may

seem to be a just indictment, but in truth it is not so. It is possible to have the simplest faith, received as a direct gift from God to the soul, and yet find room and feel need for all that painful study and strenuous thought can do.

Our inferences from what man is, and from what he has done—from history and philosophy—are a means of ascertaining truth which we should be foolish and presumptuous to neglect. They are as truly divine in their origin as is the gift of faith. And they work with faith in various ways. First, they dispose minds to seek for faith by prayer. You say to an unbeliever that, if he will ask, you are sure that the same conviction about Christ will be given him, which has been given to you. He replies that he cannot ask for that which he has no reason to expect he can receive; whatever truth he knows has come to him (so he thinks) wholly by processes of the mind; if it were possible for him to kneel down and mesmerise himself into feeling as you feel, he would despise himself for so self-deceiving, so unworthy a method. But he will not despise himself for inquiry; and if inquiry means dealing with what exists, it must be dealing with one of the manifestations of God. You are far from fearing to ask him to investigate the Scriptures, the history of the Church, the character of our Lord, the results of faith throughout Christendom, the relation of

Christian to natural ethics. You are sure that these paths will all conduct the faithful and single soul to a point where Christianity is seen to be first not impossible, and then increasingly probable. The evidence for the authorship of St. John's Gospel as Bishop Westcott has set it forth; the materials for the Life of our Lord, as Dr. Sanday has marshalled them in Hastings' "Bible Dictionary"; the witness of history to the fitness and unique character of the Incarnation, on which Bishop Talbot has discoursed in "Lux Mundi" the evidence for the Resurrection of our Lord, as you have it in the writings of Bishop Westcott, Dr. Latham, and Canon Holland—these and many more, are helps to the inquiring mind, leading often to a point at which the external inquirer says that he sees how much there is to be said for our belief. But he waits, sometimes wistfully (and we rejoice), sometimes despairingly (and we must pray), for the strong grasp of confident certainty. If we have not distinguished in our own case between what we owe to logical inference, and what we owe to a mysterious and transcendent gift, we may be in danger of keeping an inquirer waiting too long. To many of us, the gift of faith and the processes of inquiry have been mingled. We have attributed something more than probability to our intellectual conclusions, because we have

unconsciously drawn what is beyond probability from another source. And we have been right; it would have been impossible for us to have done otherwise. Where the gift of faith has been received and used, new light is shed on the facts of history and philosophy; the data which are at the disposal of all men, lie side by side, in the mind of the sons of faith, with other data, by which the inductive conclusion is largely affected. We cannot pretend that if we have lived for years in the certainty of faith, we can divest ourselves of our habit when we are seeking to explain the ground of our own convictions. No doubt we must divest ourselves of these habits of mystic assent when we try to put ourselves in the position of those who are not in possession of them. We can argue confidently from the facts which are scientifically discovered, without taking into consideration the intuitions, which in our own case illuminate those facts, but we must not expect these facts alone to lead our external friends to anything beyond a high probability. It is just that position which the man has attained who says, "I see how much there is to be said for your view, but I am not convinced of it." Then it is not our part to urge such an one to further intellectual efforts, rather we should tell him that the intellect has done all it can do. The time has come for probability to pass by spiritual means into certainty.

But the probability has done much. It has given him who recognizes it a sufficient justification for doing what before seemed to him irrational and unworthy; it has opened to him the door of prayer, through which he may enter to the holy place of faith.

We cannot leave the subject of Faith and Reason without considering what is to be done if these two great powers seem to be in conflict. Is reason to be crushed? Does faith exult in such a triumph? Those who say so seem to forget that God Almighty is the Maker of all things, and that, even in view of the sin of spirits and men, there is no room for an untruthful and misleading Creator. We need not be afraid to say that we will never neglect a statement which is really proved to be true. There is indeed one statement—seldom, perhaps, plainly uttered, but often insinuated or assumed as a bar to faith—of which we have no need to be afraid. I mean the statement that nothing is credible which is not capable of explanation according to laws of the material universe as at present known. That this assumption is untenable we need not doubt. In many fresh ways investigation is leading us to see that unexpected causes are at work. If it is true that mental suggestion can produce such a modification of bodily tissue as results in a blister, why should it be inconceivable that mental and spiritual

power may recall vital action where it has ceased to be manifested? We have increasing cause to refuse to be frightened by the assertion that miracles do not happen, and the same cause leads us to be sure that what we call a miracle is never a breach of law, but always an emphatic exhibition of the results of laws as yet unknown.

Laying aside, then, this *a priori* objection, we are frankly ready to hear anything science may have to say which would bar the propositions of the Christian Creed. In point of fact, the objections made to the articles of the Creed do not profess to be of the nature of disproof; they rest only on the assertion that our evidence is inadequate. Apart from the *a priori* objection to miracles as such, which is often present when it is not avowed, the rejection of the Virgin Birth and the actual Resurrection of our Lord is said to be made necessary by the inadequacy of the proof. It is not asserted that the narratives are disproved, but only that they are not and cannot be proved. But inadequacy of proof, or what may equally well be called, weakness of probability, presents no difficulty to those for whom certainty has already been reached by another trustworthy method. If I am made sure by my Creator that Jesus is His Consubstantial Son, it is incredible to me that the only existing account of the birth, life, death, and raising of Jesus should be gravely mis-

leading—should fail me, that is, in any of those particulars which have been included in the faith, and helped to mould the life of those millions who for nearly two thousand years have been conscious of the gift of faith.

In a case where science has really contradicted what has passed for revelation, as in relation to the Hebrew narrative of creation, candid admission that the impugned view cannot be really part of the mould of faith is due from those who see no similar cause to doubt any article of the Apostles' Creed.

I venture to hope that in what I have said as to the relation of Faith and Reason I have only expressed what is in the minds of almost all those who are preparing for Holy Orders, but experience shows that what is present in the mind has not always been fully realised. The question, 'Why am I a Christian?' ought always to find a ready answer from a Christian priest, and it is possible for him to give it in a form which the simplest and the most educated of his people can make their own —he may say, "I am a Christian because the gift of faith in Jesus Christ has been conferred upon me by my Heavenly Father. Many lines of inference, enriched by varied knowledge, lead me to see the probability of the proposition that Christ is God; the gift of the Father assures me of it."

This foundation is not the less needful because

much has to be built upon it. There are certain inferences on which all who are true believers in the Incarnation are agreed; there are others on which they are not agreed, and of these latter some, at least, are not closed questions to those who have undertaken the obligations which are conditions of ministry in the English Church.

It would be hardly possible to find a believer in the true Godhead of our Lord who is not also a believer in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. As I have already said, it is not easily conceivable that if the Incarnation be true, the only existing record of it should be false. If Christian fellowship is based on a common faith in Jesus Christ, the acceptance of the Holy Scriptures by the whole body of believers makes it impossible for such believers to doubt that they are a peculiar Divine instrument for the revelation of our Lord, that, to use His own words, they "testify of Him." If this peculiar function of Holy Scripture is not all that is properly meant by the word θεοπνεῦστος, it is, at least, the chief and prominent part of that meaning.

But there are other doctrines to which we give our assent before ordination in the Church of England, that the Sacraments are *efficacia signa*, signs of what they effect, that baptized children are, as such, by baptism regenerate, that the inward part of the Sacrament of the Lord's

Supper is the Body and Blood of Christ, that the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are to be unfeignedly believed, that it is possible for a man called by the Holy Spirit to the office and work of a priest in the Church of God, to minister the doctrine and discipline of Christ, as this Church and realm hath received the same.

Around these and the like inevitable standards of doctrine difficulty and controversy have gathered. While the lay Churchman may be content to use what the Church offers, without precisely defining his relation to all the doctrinal statements of the Prayer Book, the ordained teacher cannot be released from the duty of explaining not only why he is a Christian, but why he is a Churchman, and not a Roman Catholic or a Protestant Dissenter. It will not be around each single doctrine which the Prayer Book sets before him that these considerations will separately arise. He must recognize that at the time of her separation from the rest of Christendom, the Church of England contained those who, agreeing as to the Creeds and Holy Scripture, differed widely in their conception of the Church and the Sacraments. The distinction between Catholic and Protestant which stands so clear on the Continent of Europe is far from clear in our communion. Those of us who care most for the name of

Catholic cannot refuse to admit that, in a certain adjectival sense at least, we are protestant against the claim of the papal monarchy; those to whom the substantive name of Protestant is dear cannot deny that long before the Tractarian revival the Reformed Church of England has contained those who prefer the name of Catholic. It stands for the system which, on the whole, is that of the Eastern Churches who hold the ancient creeds and councils, and have maintained for nearly a thousand years a definite rejection of the Roman claims.

It might seem at first to us all, as it has seemed immovably to some, that the toleration of such wide differences must be fatal to the claim of the Church of England to be a real teacher. And yet, in view of such differences, and in spite of them, conscientious men have been able to deliver their message, and to exhibit in themselves and their flocks the evident fruits of the Spirit. A candidate for Holy Orders may well be encouraged, by what he sees around him, to hope that, strong personal convictions on matters of dispute, will not place him in an impossible position as a priest of the Church of England. This, no doubt, would be the results of such convictions if they were held to be of the same importance as the fundamental truths of the Creed. If I held a man to be a heretic for teaching what Hooker admitted and favoured and what Waterland taught, on the Holy Eucharist,

I do not see how I could dare to speak in the name of a communion in which these divines are so highly honoured, and whose formularies were accepted by them in a sense which it is impossible to reject as dishonest. But there are examples of men who, while believing that the differences on Eucharistic doctrine between ourselves and Rome are rather in detail than in substantial principle, have yet refused to condemn as untenable in the Church of England the opinion that the Real Presence is dependent, not on the consecration only which secures it for the whole Church, but also on the faith which secures it for the individual.

Thus Mr. Keble :—[1]

"I have long had an opinion that, in respect of the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, we are bound to be especially careful how we make doctrinal statements in such sense as to charge dissentients with heresy; for this reason, that while the great truths of the Creeds have been settled, even as to the wording connected with them, by true œcumenical councils (in which statement I include the doctrine of Baptism, as connected with the Pelagian controversy), it has so happened, in the providence of God, that the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist has never been subject to similar enactments until the eleventh or twelfth century, after the separation of East and

[1] "Spiritual Letters," CXIX. 212 (third edition).

West. Well therefore may each person, or each portion of the Church, for himself or itself, form strong opinions, and express them strongly, as God shall guide them, on the several points involved in the doctrine; but to impose them as articles of Faith, making those heretics who demur to them, they are not, I conceive, competent, except the point be such an one as can be shown to have been unequivocally received by the whole Church from the beginning: such (e.g.) as the Inspiration of the Holy Scripture."

It is not, I think, my duty to pursue into all its details a principle—which I hope I have sufficiently indicated—that the doctrines which are absolutely essential as necessary deductions from belief in the Incarnation stand in a different position from opinions less closely connected with that central doctrine; and that while differences must be tolerated as to what is secondary, though of high importance, unanimity in the Church of England may be hoped for on the great fundamental truths.

This at least is unquestionable, that the testimony of our formularies to what I may call the primary doctrines is far stronger than to the secondary. Few will doubt that the formularies were intended to cover wide differences on sacramental and ecclesiastical questions. If a man believes that sacraments convey a real gift, he will not find

anything that he cannot accept in the Prayer Book, even though he stops short of the doctrines of Eucharistic Sacrifice and Eucharistic Adoration; but he who desires to release himself or other ordained men from the necessity of accepting the actual Resurrection and the Virgin Birth of our Lord, is reduced to no better theory than that by bold denial of the obligation of plain words, the plainest words may be emptied of effective meaning.

The real test of the soundness of a position is the possibility of teaching it to those who are most dependent on our teaching—to children and to the poor. When these have been taught that the Eucharist is the highest kind of prayer, because in it the very Manhood of the Son is pleaded before the Father, and that the divine adoration due to the Son is quickened and made responsive by the presence of His Manhood in the Holy Sacrament, it is no doubt bitter and painful to us who have taught them that they should hear the doctrine denied by some who are authorised to teach in the name of the Church. But nevertheless, that the pleading and adoration should lose a great help to their fervour and joy is not the same thing, or a thing of the same kind as that the adoration should be deprived of the doctrine on which it is based. If my brother believes in the Lord Whose sacrifice can always and everywhere be pleaded,

and Who can always be adored because, as God, He is always present, I may be content to wait until I can win him to see that by the presence of His Manhood, the eternal and omnipresent Person of the Son makes claim upon a special response and recognition.

Forgive me if I have approached this subject from my own point of view. If I dealt with it at all, I could hardly do otherwise. My hope is that when I am trying to exhibit the way in which strong convictions do not force me to look upon those who reject them as heretics, I may be cultivating a method and a frame of mind by which others will be able to do the same thing from other sides.

If I am asked what seems to be the root of the great difference of view, my reply would be this: No man who is really seeking the truth, and wishing to see facts, can regard the Church of England as isolated from those in other communions who believe in our Lord. Unless I am mistaken, those who would differ from me, practically limit their interest in what lies outside the communion of Canterbury to the reformed bodies which stand in opposition to Rome, and which, unlike ourselves, have lost the claim to an apostolic episcopate. That limited view seems a sufficient cause for their prepossessions. I need not say that I find myself in thankful accord with those who, while they

recognize the need of reformation in the past, of appeal to Scripture and antiquity, and watchful testing of developments now, turn for the complete witness of the Holy Spirit in the modern world, not only to the reformed bodies, but to the ancient Catholic communions of East and West.

But if I have spoken from my own standpoint, I venture to hope that what I have said may be suggestive to some, who, where difference is clearly allowed amongst us, are not led to that standpoint. It is impossible to avoid seeing that at this time the foundation and limits of belief for clergy of the English Church must be defined in the prospect of candidature for Holy Orders. For my part, I do not see how it is possible to do less than to regard as necessary for all, belief in the Incarnation as it is set before us in the creeds, and as a consequence, acceptance of the creeds in their fulness, and of the message of Scripture on which they are based. As to the differences to be tolerated between those who are thus agreed, it is not easy to see how they can go so far as to admit a belief in papal supremacy, *divino jure*, and in doctrines depending thereon, or so far, on the other hand, as to admit men to whom the sacraments are in no true sense means of grace, or who believe the objective view of the Real Presence to be heretical.

Apart from the more familiar controversies connected with the names of Catholic and Protestant, our ministry brings from time to time questions as to new forms of error, not explicitly referred to in our formularies. Such are the varied forms of what St. Paul no less than the old Jewish law calls witchcraft, and especially the popular and attractive form of it which is known as Christian Science. In dealing with those who are attracted by these errors or perturbed by the attractions which they possess for others, there are many obvious considerations which are ready to our hand. The possibility of imposture is unquestionable, though it may be far from covering the whole ground which has to be surveyed. The folly of taking up readily with agents of unknown character in the unseen world may be forcibly pressed upon those who would not think of taking up with untested and uncredited strangers in the visible world. But a stronger guidance is supplied by the great principle of building upon the doctrine of the Incarnation, to which St. John definitely appeals in this regard. "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." The confession of the Incarnation, since the days of St. John, has been fenced by the definitions of the Church and, as we have already said, is bound up

with the acceptance of the gospels. Here, then, we have a ready means of guiding those who are in danger of being led astray by the imposture, or possibly the unseen evil influences, of witchcraft. If the application of the great test seems complicated, we may remember that St. John gives another test for the detection of the false prophets whom the godless spirits move. "He that is of God, heareth us: he that is not of God, heareth us not."

The general sense of the Church, expressed, as is fitting, through her apostolic rulers, is the appointed means for ascertaining the relation in which any new teaching stands to the one foundation. If it be thought that the discipline of the larger part of Western Christendom is over severe in dealing with spiritualism as identical with the already condemned witchcraft, it is for the reformed episcopate to deal with the matter. The hope may be humbly expressed that the bishops with whom we are in full communion will not separate after their next meeting without giving us some help in this matter. Meanwhile, for each of us his own bishop is the guide pointed out by scriptural teaching, and it is, of course, open to him to refer us to any of his presbyters who have the leisure and qualifications to help us.

This is but one of the many paths into which we may be led when we think of what is meant by

Faith, but none can lead us so far as to make us forget the truth, needful alike for the simplest and the most cultured of our flocks, that God, Who hath willed all men to be saved, and Who hath spoken to our fathers in many ways and many portions, hath finally spoken to us by His Son.

III

THE LIFE OF THE PRIEST

VOCATION

LAST week I tried to speak of that Faith which is the first condition of an acceptable ministry, as indeed it is the first gift which must be received by every disciple of Christ. And when the disciple has received this first gift, if it is to grow from the smallest of seeds to the greatest of trees, through the flower of hope, and with the fruit of love, there must be for every disciple his own work, suited to his own ability, and pointed out by his own call. It is not only the priest who finds a path prepared for him. There are those for whom it is certain that our sacred calling is not intended, because God has clearly called them in another line. Nor is mere inclination, still less wilful choice or easy acquiescence in the wish of others, or (least of all) the desire for an easy life, a lawful cause for offering ourselves. We must be able to express our conviction that we are called by the Spirit of God. I suppose the ideal beginning of ministerial life would be the unsought invitation

of authority. If the Bishop's flock were not too large for him to have some personal knowledge of at least the most hopeful of the children whom he confirms, it would be from his lips that the words would most fitly come, "Son, go work to-day in the vineyard"; as it is, his place must be taken by the pastor of the second order, nay, by any loving and faithful voice, such as that of a good woman, long gone to her rest, whose question I can never forget, fixed in memory as to place and surroundings, in my thirteenth year, bringing to a blessed point what before had been vague: 'Do you wish to be a priest?' At any rate, if our present customs are far from the ideal, we still understand that no man can demand Holy Orders; that all he can do is to ask permission from his Father in God to be a candidate at his ensuing ordination, even if it is possible to add that one of his parish priests is willing to give a nomination to special service; and we are aware that the Bishop is bound to test our fitness by testimony and examination, and that it is always in his power to refuse to give the call.

You will here and there meet with a good layman, perhaps conspicuously serving God, whose sense of being called to his lay service is dimmed by the thought that the preaching of the gospel seems almost to have been the universal test of discipleship, and who is inclined to say that every

true son of the Church ought to be a candidate for Holy Orders. More frequently, the same universal proposition, that every good man ought to be a clergyman, underlies the pitiable form of excuse for sin, which dares to say, "I am not going to be ordained, so I need not care."

For the relief of the one, and the warning of the other, we need to keep clear the double truth, that all men are called to be disciples, and that, out of the band of disciples, for the work of His special agents, our Lord calleth unto Him whom He will. Like the call to poverty, indispensable for the young ruler who was seen to be fit for it, but not imposed upon the generous Zaccheus, who gave largely, without giving all; like the call to celibacy, to be received only by those to whom it is given, the call to the ministry is a definite gift, following upon, but not always accompanying, the gift of faith. In its nature, however, the gift of vocation is similar to the gift of faith. As, in the first case, many intellectual helps precede or concur with the mysterious inward light, so there are definite external steps which lead up to or, like the hands manifesting the internal action of the timepiece, witness to the inward conviction that the call is given. The first of these steps is perhaps that freedom from other calls, inconsistent either generally or in a particular case with the call to the Ministry. Though it is not

the Divine will that every disciple should be, by special profession, an evangelist, the cases are probably rare in which the previous call is so clear that there is no need to consider the matter. With a few exceptions, it may be safely said that every young man, looking forward to life as a true and devoted servant of Christ, will ask himself in some of the solemn moments of communion with his Lord, 'What wilt Thou have me to do?' and, while he asks the question, the possible path to ordination will be within his sight. If a man is free from other calls, he can hardly fail to feel that further questions must follow. He has asked, Am I free? and no bar is found. Now comes the closer question, Am I fit?

The great need of the Church for men to serve their brethren in Christ's name has sometimes of late tended to cause the mistaken impression that any educated man will be welcomed. Rather, it is satisfactory to reflect that the diminished incomes, and increased standard of labour are likely to discourage unfit candidates of a certain kind, and that the Bishops have been led to raise the standard of examination while they are urging men not to lose a true vocation. It may, perhaps, be permissible to express a hope that in so high and delicate a matter as the testing of a Divine call, while, as a general rule, the standard of intellectual attainment is fixed at a high level, it will

be recognized by those to whom the matter is entrusted by our Bishops, that, where no idea of competition is to be entertained, the fitness of different men may be often best ascertained by very different means. However this may be, severity in the Bishop's examiners ought to be a matter of satisfaction to a candidate of the right character. Of all the self-revealing words for which we owe so much to St. Paul, there is none which we need more to borrow than the question, inevitable in all true men, rising to the point of agony in the saint, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Scripture adds the like words from nearly every prophet who has received the call. "Send by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." "Who am I, and what is my father's house?" "I cannot speak, for I am a child." "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth." The only satisfying reply is the conviction that the hand of God is found in the circumstances of a man's life,—"In the roll of the book it is written of me," as well as in the unearthly communications that reach the soul,—"I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." After the place which examination has held in school and university life, it may not be easy to look upon a severe test as a relief. But if

conscience has spoken faithfully, and the test is imposed with wise elasticity as well as with searching severity, it ought to be a relief. What applies to the actual examination in orthodox belief and in sufficient knowledge, applies likewise to the whole relation of the candidate for Holy Orders to the Bishop, who represents the Divine Society, in which the same Holy Spirit speaks, Who speaks also in the faithful heart, and Whose witness, so far external, confirms and accepts the internal witness of which the heart is conscious. If a man has done his best to submit himself to the divinely appointed judgment of the Church, and knows that all hindrances to his acceptance have been searched out and loosed, he will have the best reply to any misgivings which the enemy may suggest in the stress of work in his after life.

It is wisdom to wish the Bishop to know our weakest points in body, mind, and spirit. As to bodily defects, such as impaired eyesight or the loss of a limb, it is the Bishop who must decide, after consideration of the balance of qualifications in the particular instance. It must not cause us surprise if we are asked as to the state of our health. Again, if the Bishop inquires if we are free from debt, it will not always mean that debts which we have a reasonable prospect of paying, and as to which we have an honest understanding with our creditors, are a bar to our acceptance.

If, as is sometimes the case, the Bishop asks for a reference to those persons of reputation who have known us best from childhood, we must not interpret this as meaning those whose opinion of us is most to our liking. On the other hand, it is right to note that the testimony of the three beneficed clergymen who state that they have had opportunities of observing our conduct, and that they have no reason to suppose that we have failed in faith or morals, is testimony as to the reputation we have borne before men, not to freedom from hidden failure, of which we ourselves or our nearest associates may be conscious. Yet again, if there be grave failures, knowledge of which might reach the Bishop through other channels, there is no such strong security for peace of mind in after life, as the courage which has made the Bishop acquainted with the worst he can ever come to know. When pardon has been secured by faithful repentance, it seems pitiable that want of courage should render any one of us liable to fear a record that may leap to light. Far happier to accept delay than to go forward with fear hanging over a man's head.

I should like to add a word more about the intellectual preparation for Holy Orders. There is, I think, a danger lest the *minimum* of fitness be taken as the standard. If what was said in the last lecture is true, as to the primary place of

divinely-given faith in our life and work, it is possible for a man who cherishes that gift to witness to it and to build on it. But if we were also led to see that the whole of philosophy and the whole of history must be claimed as contributing evidence to our religion, there must be room for a far wider and more complete education. Certainly the man who has had the best training in philosophy and history, ought not to be content without a training of the same sort in theology. His brethren have a right to ask of him not only the witness, that in view of what culture and knowledge have brought him he still believes, but something also of the demonstration that, since truth is one, all true facts and all sound inquiry are at least the friends if not the allies of faith. The more capable and the better educated a man is, the more it is worth his while to prolong his study before ordination. Indeed, it may be said without hesitation that a man who has done well in the Honour Schools of the University ought to need a longer preparation in theology, and especially apologetic theology, than most other men. It is not his fault or misfortune, but his privilege, that he is aware of questions and lines of thought which, at first sight seem to conflict with his creed, and, just because the mystical gift of faith enables him to feel sure that an adequate reply is to be be found, it is his work and duty to find it. I will

venture to say that a man ought not to be discouraged if, at the end of his University career, he finds himself able to be a sincere communicant, saying the Creed with a good conscience, but unable, without further time and study and reflection, to offer himself as the teacher of others in the things of faith. Other teaching may serve as an employment for a time; it often has done so with excellent result. The point I wish to press is that neither such a man himself, nor his friends, nor the Church, should look upon the delay as strange, still less as discreditable.

Of the two conditions of vocation which we have named, freedom and fitness, the first is wholly and the second partly negative. We have been asking in various ways whether there is any reason why a man should not seek Holy Orders. But the consideration of fitness has led us to touch on what is positive—conviction, knowledge, training; and it is these and other further positive qualifications that concern us most.

Along with the sense of unworthiness and distrust of a man's own powers which are so frequent in the prophets, there is the burning fire within the heart, the necessity laid upon the apostle, the listening ear, the sense of being held in the hollow of the hand of God, and of having been separated by His grace from the mother's womb, which, unlike the sense of unworthiness, culminate in the

mind of Christ;—"I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished"; "I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I, if it be already kindled."

We are very differently moulded; each has his own character and history. One man can express to others his deepest convictions, another can hardly put them in words for himself; but there is one simple test which may serve in every case to indicate the desire which is so strong in some cases, the test of the hope of happiness. Joy always goes with what is most divine in man, and this is still true when we remember that man is born to trouble. It is not the absence of sorrow, but the presence, the dominant presence, of joy with sorrow that marks the Christian. The last question that can be written down is, 'Can I hope to be happy in the life of a priest?'

Now, to answer this rightly we must have formed some idea of what the life is. In a right state of Church dicipline, a man's own pastor will have been part of his experience from a child. Even if the pastor has been unworthy, his office ought to have touched a lad's life at confirmation. But it is only honest to admit that this experience has often been omitted. A man may have a true call to be the servant of Christ and His people, with the very smallest experience of what his concrete work and life will be, and, quite apart from

fault or failure, a man may know one kind of clerical life and be quite ignorant of another. He may, for instance, know much about work in the poorest parts of London, and know nothing of work in the country. He may even find himself saying that, in view of what great cities ask, the small rural populations can scarcely make any claim upon him. But if we are right in putting the pastoral part of our work above the missionary part, we shall see that the care of those who recognize that they are members of the Church in the country is more important than the conversion of those who are outside and unconcerned. I do not forget that indiscriminate baptism of infants has put us in a false position towards a great part of the town population, but in the country the people are not only baptized; they still look for our ministrations. Moreover, the villages are continually sending up their young people into the cities, and to have laid a good foundation will be a help and a power in times and places far removed from the view of the faithful country priest. A friend of mine was surprised to find the priest of a united and faithful village in the Austrian Tyrol preaching one Sunday morning on the existence of God. When my friend expressed his surprise, the priest said, "The young men have to go into the towns." When a man is making up his mind as to vocation, the settlements

in East and South London are often a great help. But so also are country parsonages, where a man may simply board and see what is going on, getting far more than he knows of aptitude for rural work, and gaining some glimpses at least of the ways of country people.

But it is not the varying circumstances of the life that chiefly concern us. However much one may be tempted to linger over what it is most easy to speak of, I am bound to say plainly that the conversion and perfecting of men and women to the glory of God must be the aim that draws the will and the affections, so that the heart cannot rest in any other path. Or, to put the same thing in a way that may avoid anything like a demonstrative statement of inward experience—a man must feel that he can be happy in the life of a priest.

The pregnant words of Isaiah, "Here am I," in answer to the divine question, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" express the position of the man who finds that for him the conditions of service are not wanting. I will not attempt to analyse the meaning of the still more pregnant words, "Send me." Their meaning lies ready to be found in the holy places of prayer, where deep searching, high aspirations, keen pain, resolute questioning, end in joy and certainty.

Before we pass from the entrance to the daily life of the ministry, you will allow me to remark

that if a right view of our call has been obtained, we have made ourselves familiar with the right apparatus, if I may so speak, for dealing with those decisions which recur so frequently in our life. The same questions as to freedom, fitness, and the hope of happiness which help us to know whether we are called to the ministry, will help us also in deciding to what kind of work and to what places we are called when we are already ordained. We shall have to decide whether calls to new work are really Divine calls, and in this matter the question "Am I free?" will be very serious.

And we must be prepared for further experience of vocation. We shall find that when we are putting to other men's consciences the claim of foreign missions for gifts and personal service, we ourselves, if we have not done so before, will be forced to ask whether we too are called. It may be that, for those who are free from bonds or pledges of marriage, the sight of the dedicated life may require a like self-interrogation.

And the same principles will serve our need when we have to decide upon the right modes of working and the right times for developing them. Much searching of heart must and often ought to be caused by the question of frequency in the celebration of the Eucharist, of the best way to instruct, the best means and the right moment

to restore what we see to be wanting in our Church life, how to reach alienated classes, when to begin a guild or a system of classes, when to arrange for a Parochial Mission. In these cases the questions will take a somewhat different form. Instead of "Am I free?" we ask, "Is there any valid objection?" Instead of "Am I fit?" we shall consider "Have I the means of doing this?" and lastly, "Will it promote happiness through increase in the love and service of God and of man?"

Those who tell us that there is nothing to be done in the country will be surprised if I say that the ordering of our time, so as not to lose precious hours and minutes, is no less needful there than in the town. The relation between the two departments of work was well expressed by a man of long experience, who said, "When I had four hundred people, each was a separate charge; now that I have eight thousand, that is impossible." In truth, it is the country work that allows the ideal of the Christian pastorate: wherever the close relations set forth in the New Testament prevail, five hundred souls are not too few to occupy a faithful priest. This would be more obvious if there were not village communities where, through past neglect, the flock have come to look elsewhere for shepherding, or have forgotten the need and possibility of it; but even

in these cases, the missionary efforts which must be directed in a vast population to drawing one and another from the mass must be (however difficult the task) spent upon a patient siege of some hundreds of alienated souls.

But it is not in view of extreme cases that we ought to make our plans. We must consider the daily life of the priest, and especially of the country priest, as it will be in normal work.

Perhaps Sunday will take care of itself, though it is good to remember that it is not always wise to let the whole of its hours be occupied in church. There are men who can only be seen on Sunday, candidates for baptism, confirmation, or communion who must have part of their preparation on Sunday, if the whole preparation is not to be worked out when they are too tired to give proper attention. There is no part of Sunday which can always be a time of rest and relaxation for a faithful priest.

But it is to the arrangement of the week-days, when duties are less conspicuous, if not less important, that we must apply ourselves. There are one hundred and forty-four hours to be accounted for between every two Sundays of our lives. They must be apportioned to sleep, meals, devotion, reading, visiting, interviews, and recreation. Few men ought to give less than forty hours in six days to sleep; some need fifty. When it is impossible

to get the proper amount of sleep at night, it may be lawful to make up part of what has been lost at some interval during the day. If this is done deliberately and with a good conscience, it will be guarded against excess and demoralisation. We cannot forget the context of the warning about "sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber." If we say that to each of the duties, of devotion, reading, and visiting, not less than fifteen hours a week should be assigned, it may seem excessive to leave rather more than fifty for meals and recreation; but we shall probably find that two and a half hours a day, on an average, for the three great duties is enough for a minimum. It is probably better to arrange our rule on the basis of the week than on that of the day, because it may be convenient to omit one day's visiting and make it up on other days, so as to get a day for more continuous reading.

But it is not by time alone that the rule of life should be made. A list of employments is also a help. Perhaps the employments of pastoral life are about eight in number — the Eucharist, the divine service, study, private prayer, visiting, teaching, recreation, and business.

I put the Eucharist first because it represents our ideal relation to God and man as set for us by the example of our Lord. His central miracle of the loaves and fishes stands in close character-

istic relation to the Eucharist. Triumphant over the difficulties and questions caused by the multitudes who have to be dealt with, our Lord stands with what the day has brought forth in His holy and life-giving hands, giving thanks to His Father, and then dispensing food through His apostles to all who have followed Him. This same position is ours whenever in the perfection of thanksgiving we bring all things, along with the appointed offerings, before God; and as we obey the institution of Christ, find that it is His finished Sacrifice that we possess and plead, His Flesh and Blood that we dispense to the people. When once this interpretative act is realised, there will be those to whom the repetition of the act cannot seem too frequent. There are records of early Bishops who celebrated many times a day; it may be remembered that the ardent spirit of Charles Gordon caused him to spend his Sundays in London in seeking Communion as often as was possible in the same day. No doubt the rule of the Church which in East and West has come to restrict us to one communion in each day, commends itself to our sense of reverence and our sense of proportion; no doubt different opinions will be held amongst us as to whether a daily Eucharist is to be aimed at. But however this may be, the possible needs of the dying may, under our present discipline, require us to cele-

brate, and therefore to receive, at any hour of the day or night, and this fact brings the greatness of our priestly calling before the mind. Whether or not we are led by desire and opportunity to aim—however gradually—at the position of a daily Communicant, nothing less than what would be required of us for such a privilege, ought to be the ideal of each returning day. To be claiming my place as the child of God with my whole heart according to His will, and to be hungering for the Divine Food which is Christ Himself, is what every Christian should accept as his aim, what every Christian priest should recognize as the foundation of his work.

It is as the complement of the Eucharistic Liturgy that the daily recitation of Psalms, with their accompaniments, is commended to us.

The Psalter is our inheritance as representing the mind of Christ. The Psalms express in varying moods the human heart in relation to God. They lift us to high aspirations; they consecrate every genuine feeling of man, in his questionings and his sufferings, which is consistent with faith and love towards the one Lord of his life. But for those who believe in Christ the chief meaning and value of the Psalms does not lie in their origin, but in their use by Him. It may not be certain that all the Psalms were used in the Jewish worship, and we may not be able to say

that our Lord used every word of them in public. They are, however, a real part of those Scriptures which he claimed as witnesses to Himself, and the way in which they would naturally have been used by a Jew would be as a manual of devotion, the organ of his intercourse with God. It is not, I think, too much to say that our Lord, in the position which He took as Son of David, adapted every Psalm to His own use. That each Psalm was capable of such adaptation through the preparing guidance of the Holy Spirit is what we can most securely recognize as the result of inspiration. This view of the Christian use of the Psalms is greatly strengthened when we find that it helps us in regard to the greatest difficulty which that use has to meet. Christian utterance cannot but hesitate over the Psalms of malediction. Mercy and charity, as we learn them in Christ, would not allow us to frame such words. We do not fear to say that those to whom they came as the fitting expression of their indignation had not been taught as we are taught. But the second correcting thought is, that this is not only a consequence of Christian mercy and charity, but of the imperfection of human knowledge. We cannot judge, because we only know a part of the facts which are the basis of judgment. Mercy and charity restrain condemnation, until it is compelled by the irresistible outcome of full knowledge. But

in Christ, the Judge of men, there is no restraint of knowledge. Though He laid aside the use of His Divine omniscience as He increased in wisdom, its stores were always at the command of His will; or, if we prefer so to regard the matter, His will was never separated from the will of the Spirit who filled His Manhood, and the action of the Spirit caused Him in the most perfect manner to know all things. Maledictions, which we should rightly fear to make our own because of an imperfect knowledge, came from His mind secured by the knowledge, the wisdom, and the love of God. So secured, they are prayers for that chastisement of sin, that discipline of sorrow and pain, which is used by God for His wise and inscrutable purposes.

Forgive me if I have turned aside to a difficult subject. Hard as it is, experience shows that it will always recur when we think of the call to show ourselves glad before God with Psalms, and the use of the Psalter, which is an integral part of the Christian life, cannot be peacefully enjoyed until this difficulty has been faced.

I venture to hope that what may be called the Christian use of the Psalter will give us the right key to the place of the daily service in our lives. The monthly recitation of words which contain the mind of Christ will be found to supply what we need as we desire to bring our flock and our

work with ourselves before God, and as this need increases, the service will be enriched with a growing fulness of meaning, while we ourselves experience something of the ἐπίγνωσις and αἴσθησις to which we are called.

The Eucharist and the Psalter, quickened by the Holy Spirit, increasing and developing our union with Christ, are the appointed organs of that diligence in prayer which is the subject of one of our Ordination vows.

The same vow includes our duty as to Holy Scripture, which is to occupy us next week. Let me say, however, at once that there is a link between prayer and Holy Scripture which must on no account be passed over—I mean the difficult but fruitful practice of meditation. This is the very salt of our public service, the safeguard of frequent communions, the means of winning a unique power and blessing in the daily service, and the quickening of our private prayers. Leaving for the present, then, the further discussion of this great help of the pastoral life, let me mention certain elements of private prayer. The development of public worship and the free use of our churches are great blessings, but we must be on our guard against a possible abuse of them in the neglect of private prayer. If our Lord has given us the centre of all public worship when He says, "Do this in remembrance of Me," He has no less

given the idea of all private prayer when He bids us enter into our closet and shut the door, and pray to our Father Who is in secret. If it is well for men to make meditations together in the chapel of a theological college, or at a retreat, this must not take the place of prayer in our own rooms, where self-consciousness is at its least, and the absence of men tests our realisation of the presence of God. No doubt, where we have frequent access to Holy Communion, our private prayers will tend to have a definite relation to it by the use of preparation, thanksgiving, and prolonged intercession, but if we allow ourselves to say no prayers except those which are said in the presence of others, we cannot but suffer loss, for we are losing sight of our Lord's own command.

If the question is asked whether private prayers are best said from books or without them, I think the best counsellors will tell us that we need a book, but that we must not be dependent upon our book. Perhaps the best book is a manuscript book, formed and growing under our own constant use. Whether we make much use of written prayers or not, it will, I think, be found that the heads of private prayer are about seven in number.

First comes the Lord's Prayer, which, together with the Eucharist and the Psalter, stands in a

central place, as being one of the three great instruments of prayer left to us by our Lord Himself.

Secondly, the right relation of the creature to the Creator is expressed by adoring Praise.

Thirdly, the experience of life adds to praise Thanksgiving. Praise honours God for what He is; thanksgiving honours Him for what He has done for us.

Fourthly, we need to review and secure our right relation to God by the three great actions of the sanctified and endowed human spirit—Faith, Hope, and Love. I do not presume to suggest the verbal form which these should take. I will but venture to suggest that it should be simple, pregnant, and true to the convictions of those who use it. To secure this last condition it should be such as can cover varied experiences; it should avoid high-flown or exaggerated utterances. It may be that "I desire to love" is safer than "I love." But, however they are worded, and whether or not the same form of words is always used, the increase of faith, hope, and charity is undoubtedly promoted by what are fitly called acts of these virtues.

Fifthly, out of the act of love must arise the need for deepened penitence. If I love God, I must hate what He hates. I have sinned only because my affections or my will have lost that

love which is the essence of sonship. Confession of sin must have its place in our prayers.

As in the Lord's Prayer itself, after the trespasses of the past we turn to the dangers of the future, and the sixth place is taken by prayer for that unmerited kindness of God which we call Grace.

Lastly, we turn from ourselves to others, and completing the sequence which began with the Lord's Prayer, and has included praise, thanksgiving, acts of the theological virtues, confession of sin, and prayer for grace, we put in the seventh place Intercession.

In the true pastoral life this seventh head will find unlimited opportunities and demands.

First of all, intercession will form part of one kind of prayer which is not included in a daily rule, because it is in its nature both frequent and exceptional; I mean ejaculatory prayer. Here the privacy of the chamber is succeeded by the privacy of the heart, and that in the midst of the most thronged and distracting publicity. What the preacher can do visibly when he kneels for a moment in the pulpit before he addresses the people is no less full of power when the prayer is offered without the slightest outward sign, during a conversation, or when a sudden meeting gives a precious opportunity that may soon be lost. But if a moment is enough for intercession,

when no more can be had, we have the highest example to show that when time can be had, the prolonged use of time is one element in the great work of turning the will and affections in verbal and vocal energy to the aid of our brethren before God.

Cambridge has lately given us a fresh instance of one who knew how to profit by the Divine example. In the stimulating record of Mr. Forbes Robinson's life we read that he could give as much as two hours in the afternoon for intercession.

Plans of intercession must vary according to the varieties of character and habit. Nothing is essential but that the persons and their needs should be fastened on by the memory and imagination; or—shall I rather say?—that these faculties of our nature shall receive the names and needs at His inspiration from whom all good counsels proceed, and that by thought and word, culminating and finding consecration in the Eucharistic action, they shall be laid before Him in responsive love. Lists there must be—probably written lists, besides the familiar chaplet of names which each man has treasured, with rare additions, from his earliest years. Perhaps the best convenience and the safeguard against formalism are attained by the use of a simple list, receiving new names continually, and divided into threes or fives for daily

use. Another good plan is to take the names in the parish or district, one each day.

As I have left meditation, so I will ask your permission to note that I leave two other constituents of the pastoral-day for a later lecture—teaching and visiting. And of the eight points which I noted there remain only recreation and business.

Recreation stands for all men among the five heads under which expenditure, whether of money or time, is needed for personal efficiency. It is a Cambridge professor to whom I have long been indebted for the privilege of handing on his lucid and precious teaching on this matter. Every clergyman will be the better for reading the pages in which Professor Marshall has shown that the omission of what is needed for efficiency in food, clothing, dwelling place, education, and recreation is really waste. It may occur to you that if we are bound to give ourselves not less and not more than the requisite amount of these things, and if to give less is as wrong economically as to give more, it will be hard to find a place for the Christian duties of fasting and almsgiving.

Really, I venture to think, the true purpose of fasting and almsgiving is shown by this very difficulty. The economical basis of expenditure takes account first of the body and the mind. I do not think our best economic teachers will be displeased

if we add the consideration of the needs of the spirit of man. The life and the body themselves point us to the spirit as their appointed ruler and interpreter, and it is in virtue of this lofty indication that the life and the body are more than food and raiment. The efficiency of the body and mind is first seen to depend upon not less than the proper supply of food ; a deeper and truer estimate requires that material efficiency shall be healthfully impaired, in order that the supremacy of the spirit may be made plain. If this is obvious as to food, it is also true of recreation. To the spiritual beginner a large amount of recreation, physical and mental, will be necessary. As the spirit extends its empire over the whole man, so that he is worthy to be called πνευματικος, he comes nearer to that supreme human recreation, which while it did not disdain the hills, or the retired side of the lake, or the neighbourhood of the Mediterranean waters, was above all found in the time when our Lord took His most responsive friends and went apart with them to pray.

The hallowing of recreation in the day, in the week, and in the yearly holiday is a large part of spiritual progress. Let us be sure that the recreation must be real. Those of us whose work takes us in to many varied places, as was the case with the work of our Lord Himself, must remember to bear witness that the monotony of parochial, and especi-

ally of country life, needs relief. The city may be as necessary for the recreation of the country parson as the country is for his town brother. Common sense, and the example of men of high life and work, has caused almost all manly sports to be recognized as open to the clergy. Perhaps, if it is thought probable that the progress of moral feeling will in the end condemn an institution of such manifest advantage as the hunting-field, clergy should be the first to recognize what the legend of St. Hubert suggested long ago; but it is rather around the amount than the kind of recreation that danger lies. It is not good if the priest is able to spare more time than other professional men for the golf-links; it is humiliating to be told by ladies that it is to the clergy that they can always turn when they want men with leisure for amusement. Lastly, a place must be found in the pastoral life for business. The care of money, of land, of buildings, the conduct of parish meetings, the care of schools;—these things still belong to the country parson, more than to the town parson, and if the tendency of recent times is to lessen the area of his responsibility, the seriousness of it is by no means diminished. A friend of mine who has never gained less than the highest honours in any examination at Oxford, and I think never failed to win any divinity prize that he has tried for, is on

the point of spending a year in a lawyer's office, with as clear a conviction that he is spending his time well, as he had when he lately went for some months to foreign universities. To be indifferent to wealth is not to be careless as to the stewardship of money; to be known as a man whom no banker or lawyer can rely on for ordinary care or pains is to discredit the sacred cause for which we live. As to knowledge of business, a clergyman ought not to be behind a good citizen. At least he ought to have some acquaintance with the law of the Church, and the State law in its relation to to Church matters. Mr. Lacey's recent volume on Church Law leaves us with very little excuse if we are ignorant of the ordinary procedure and the appointed rules by which our duties to others are to be guided.

IV

THE PASTOR IN RELATION TO THE BIBLE

WHEN a man is made a deacon, the Bishop delivers to him the New Testament, saying, "Take thou authority to read the gospel in the Church of God, and to preach the same if thou be thereto licensed by the Bishop himself."

He has previously declared that he unfeignedly believes all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and that he will diligently read the same unto the people assembled in the church where he shall be appointed to serve.

When, by his ordination to the priesthood, he enters upon the pastoral office, he receives a Bible from the Bishop with the words, "Take thou authority to preach the Word of God."

He has on this occasion declared and promised that he is persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and that he is determined, out of the same Scriptures, to instruct the people committed to his

charge, and to teach nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which he shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture, and that he will be diligent as in prayer, so also in the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and of the flesh.

We may note that the sacred books are received from the representative of the Church, and that the New Testament, and especially the gospel, is given earlier than the whole Bible, and that one doctrine alone is named as already accepted before the teaching of further doctrine out of the Scripture begins. These points will, I think, be recognized as being in accord with what was said in the first lecture as to our faith. We saw that it is a gift from God, causing a particular conviction concerning Christ, and that it is to those who believe in Him, and are members of His Church, that the Holy Scriptures yield their treasures. We may add, what is implied by the priority of faith in Christ to our use of Scripture, that it is when we rightly understand the New Testament that we can rightly use the Old Testament.

There can be no doubt that the books of the New Testament presuppose faith in Christ and membership in His Church, and that each of them was given, at its first appearance, into the hands

of those who had believed and been admitted to the sacraments, just as the books of the Old Testament were given to those who had been admitted to the covenant of God with His chosen people. When, therefore, we consider what may be concluded and proved by Scripture, we must do so from the point of view of those to whom the Scriptures were first given. The New Testament throughout implies the Christian society, and an intelligent reader of it, who knew nothing of such a society, would obviously ask what the society is, whether it still exists, and what light its customs and teaching can throw upon the sacred books.

This may seem obvious enough, but no man can work long among the English poor without finding that the most startling deductions are made by sincere people, who think that they can interpret the sacred text, without any reference to what the Holy Spirit has already led the Universal Church to gather from it.

The opposite mistake, which treats the Bible as simply a decorative appendage to Church decisions, and allows the individual Christian no real share in assuring himself from Scripture of the truth of what the Church teaches, has tended quite lately to take a new form. The writings of M. Loisy have been condemned at Rome, but the spirit which they have encouraged is alive both in the Roman Church and amongst ourselves. In our

efforts to reassure those who are disquieted by such criticisms of the gospel as those of Professor Harnack, we may find ourselves saying, with Bishop Creighton, "The less we make of the record, the more marvellous becomes the Person recorded," but sincere belief in the Person of our Lord will hardly coexist with disbelief in the one record which has been accepted by all those who have received the intuition or inspiration of belief in Him through the Christian centuries. As has been already said, disproof of the gospel record might make us pause, but a mere statement that proof is inadequate will not disquiet us when the certainty of faith lies behind the greater or lesser probability of proof.

It may be that, for most of us, a more serious question arises in connexion with our declaration that we believe all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. No doubt these words meant to many of our predecessors in the pastoral office that they were assured of the exact historical truth of all that is proposed, or may be represented as being proposed as history, in the sacred books. No doubt to many of us the inspiration of the Bible has come to mean the Divine guidance of each part and of the whole to a definite purpose, rather than a guarantee for historical truth. We have grave reasons for this change of view, for a change it is to many men of

my age. The most accepted, and not the least devout scholarship amongst our living teachers, assures us that it is both needless and impossible to maintain the historical infallibility of the sacred books as such. If we feel constrained to accept this assurance, we are greatly comforted by the reflection that the recorded words of our Lord about the Old Testament do not enforce what we are called on to relinquish. "They are they," He says, "which testify of Me." If we add St. Paul's statement that they tend to the moral perfection of the man of God, we have a strong and consistent account of what is meant by inspiration which does not conflict with the best teaching of reverent and hallowed reason. Each book of the Bible, each Psalm, is recognized as inspired, because each contributes its own assistance to a right knowledge of the Incarnation of the Son of God and the right ordering of the life of a disciple.

If we are led to this view of what is meant by Divine inspiration, we may fairly say that we believe the Scriptures when we accept the message which they bring us from God, or if I may call your attention to some recent words of the Bishop of Birmingham, in his Worcester Charge, if we believe heartily that the Bible as a whole records and contains the message of God in all its stages of delivery, and that each one of the books contains some element or aspect of revelation.

It may have seemed needless for me to enter on these matters when you have ready access to those who can deal with them much better and more deeply than I can, but perhaps some advantage may be gained by the plain testimony of one who, like the majority of our clergy, is using largely the labours of others. A fear is sometimes felt that it needs a very expert scholar to hold his own as an authorised teacher in our day. Let me say, then, that while every bit of genuine knowledge or painstaking thought brings its own assistance, I have found my power of using the Bible for pastoral purposes in no way lessened, rather greatly increased, by what I have gleaned during the last twenty years at Oxford—what I have learned (for it is better to be explicit) from Dr. Gore and Dr. Sanday.

Believe me, our chief efforts as regards the use of the Bible for the salvation and sanctification of ourselves and others need not be directed to controversy, but to use, not least to that humble part of use which is so much set before us—I mean actual vocal reading. At a recent funeral in Oxford the Burial Lesson was read by a senior member of the University, not in Holy Orders. The chapter and verse were given out in a quiet, subdued, prefatory voice, which was not without a certain sympathy, and the great words of St. Paul were so read as to diffuse a sense of comfort and

peace. No syllable was lost; no accent jarred. The words were read as well-known cherished possessions shared by the reader and the congregation.

I could not but ask myself whether our constant reading increases our power, whether we become careless, or whether, for fear of carelessness, we find ourselves seeking for freshness and effect in jarring emphasis and gratuitous interpretation.

In the Rule of St. Benedict it is provided that the weekly reader, when he enters on his duty, shall kneel before each of the brethren and ask his prayers. The facility of modern reading need not be an excuse for neglect of the preparation and the dependence on Divine help which this direction indicates. It is a man's own fault if he reads a lesson of which he has never tried to discover the meaning. We ought not to be troubled with self-consciousness if we have really asked for the power to be instruments, as the words we use are instruments, of the Most High. Probably there are few men who are not the better from some professional hints as to voice-production. But certain things are obvious. The pitch and loudness of the voice must be fitted to the size of the building; the pace and interpretation must be varied for different classes of people. For country people the reading should be slow, but not without animation. If I am reading a difficult chapter from the prophets

before benches of rustic labourers, I ought not to be discouraged by the thought that they cannot follow the course of the prophet's thought. An isolated sentence, even a phrase, may light a flame of memory, of aspiration, of compunction. But this can only be if the reader is deliberate and allows the jewel to shine in the context, which may be only a setting to the hearer. The least that can be asked of a reader of Scripture is that he shall show reverence and affection for what he reads.

But if the importance of good reading must be insisted on because it may be easily forgotten, the importance of preaching will not be undervalued. Certainly it cannot be set too high. Even in a time when Church attendance has decreased, interest in sermons remains.

It is of set purpose that I ask you to consider preaching under the title of this lecture. The Bible is not for the sermon, but the sermon for the Bible. I am not an orator, a lecturer, or even a teacher, who draws his chief material from Holy Scripture, but I am the servant of the Word of God, and my utterance has for its whole object the illumination, exposition, enforcement of that Word. I am to preach not because I must say something, but because I have something to say, and I shall never be without something to say if my aim is to set before the people what the Bible

teaches to those who believe in Jesus Christ. To fix my subject and then adorn it with a text as a mere motto ought never to be permissible. To feel bound to speak on a particular subject, and to look for a text the real meaning of which will help my subject, may be occasionally right, but the normal procedure is ask myself what teaching comes naturally from the Scriptures of the day. Among these, the gospel in the liturgy holds the first place. If the gospel is not read at the time when most people come to church, the advantage of reading it in the pulpit is the more apparent, especially when the second morning lesson is not from the evangelists. Probably most men can preach for two years from the gospel for the day without repetition ; if the epistle gives the subject for the third year, and some text suggested by the collect for the fourth year, the four lessons for the day may supply courses for four more years, and in the ninth year it will not be difficult to return to the gospel again.

If such a course supplies the usual subject for a Sunday morning sermon, there will be no difficulty in taking another subject when circumstances or the devout inclination, which may be Divinely guided, suggest a change. For the second sermon of the day the preacher will be wise to have a course connected in his own thought, if not so set before his people. In this way he may pass from

point to point in some book of the Bible, though perhaps he would shrink from undertaking a formal and complete exposition. A man's preaching should be like a tree, ever putting forth new branches and leaves, with a common life and character giving unity to the whole.

Let me especially suggest in this connexion the importance of the first sermons of a ministry. Though any wise man will be modest in his beginnings, he has the great advantage that the high and simple themes of the relation of the soul to God and to Christ, the unseen power of the Holy Spirit and the future of man are fresh in his hands. During the first few years of his work the preacher has some of the same advantage in his home work which belongs to one who is called to preach in many places. In both cases a first choice of subjects is open. He is not shut off from speaking of what he cares for most, because he has already, and even quite lately, spoken of it. It is not unlikely that some of the early sermons of his ministry will expand into lines of thought and courses of teaching which he will never lay aside. If this thought gives some courage to the young preacher, who feels that a special opportunity belongs to him that will not return in all its power, a kindred thought may encourage all preachers. The fear of speaking the same things will occur to us, as it did to St.

Paul, but our second thought will be for us as for him, that a certain repetition of what never loses its freshness for the teacher will be for the good of the taught. "To write the same things unto me is not irksome, but for you it is safe." If you look out some key-word to one of the great Christian doctrines, or to some notable passage of Scripture in the index to the works of St. Augustine, you may be pleased to see that he has dealt with it in several places, but when you turn to those places you will often find that they all contain the same remarks. The truth is that we all come to have our habitual thoughts about the chief topics of our message, and it is rather fresh illustration than a new view, or even a new subject, that we can offer as the years go on. This is so true and so inevitable that it may be possible to arrange a great part of our thoughts about sermons under the account of attempts to secure what we would rather call freshness than novelty, to give as St. Vincent of Lerius tells us the Church gives to her children, "Non nova sed nové." Our minds must be made up to the life-long utterance of a message which, because it comes from God, is ever the same, yet ever new. "No new commandment write I unto you," says St. John, "but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which ye heard." But also, "A new command-

ment write I unto you," and that "because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth."

If we keep close to Scripture we shall not be without the brightness of that light. It was a touching saying of Archbishop Temple, in his old age, to an assembly of Sunday-school teachers, that, while all besides grows old, the Bible alone remains fresh.

Let me then insist a little more on the value of expository teaching. We have examples of it in the sermons both of St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom, addressed to town congregations in Antioch and Constantinople, and also, as I believe was the case with St. Augustine's sermons on the Psalms, to the fishermen of Hippo. What strikes you in these is that the saints make their way between two dangers: on the one hand, they are not hampered by an anxiety for their own credit, which would not allow them to pass over a difficulty—you may be disappointed if you turn to them for light on a hard text; on the other hand, they are not so absorbed in the needs of the people as to forget the duty of laying the actual teaching of Scripture before them.

They know the needs of their people, and they are confident that the unfolding of Scripture will meet those needs. They seize upon a point in the sacred narrative which they can bring home, and

when they have finished it they pass along the text till they come upon another. Is not this a safe plan for us? Our self-distrust surely need not deter us from reading the verses of a prophet or an apostle until we come to something which we feel our people will be encouraged, or warned, or set right by. Without much preface as to the general meaning of the book, and without any definite promise of a course of sermons upon it, the text is dealt with. After preaching the sermon, the next effort is to read on until another suitable text appears. When a good part of the book has supplied me with these stepping-stones, I may perhaps be rewarded by a faithful hearer, who says, "I thought perhaps you would have preached on a passage which I find very difficult that comes between your two last texts in Romans" or "in Malachi." Such an invitation justifies me in doing my best to obtain light on the passage which may be as difficult to me as it is to my friend. And I may be sure that if I do not wholly remove the difficulty, I shall gain instruction from the attempt.

Another lawful source of variety is the difference between different kinds of sermons. This difference has been brought out of late years, by the somewhat new names which, chiefly in missions and retreats, have been given to our utterances. We have become familiar with the announcement

of Instructions, Conferences, Meditations, Addresses. I remember well how a friend of mine, who prided himself on his common sense, loved to deride these names. "After all," he would say, "they are nothing but sermons." To which I am inclined to reply, "Yes, but the names show how much sermons differ." There is, for instance, the difference like that between a theorem and a problem in Euclid. The instruction, like the theorem, should be able to end conscientiously with Q.E.D.; or, rather, perhaps I should say that this satisfying formula should follow upon our application of Scripture to the proposition supplied to us by the Church. Behind the proposition lie our definitions, axioms, postulates, not, I fear, in so brief a compass as those of Euclid. A long course of instructions might deal with definitions alone. I venture to think that while we do not desire to have at our fingers' ends the formal definitions of a Roman Catechism, we might with great advantage cultivate the habit of securing a definition of each great truth and each theological term, which may represent not only what is common to the Christian and Catholic sense, but what belongs to our own experience and imagination. Let me give an instance. In his book on the Pelagian Treatises of St. Augustine,[1] Dr. William Bright thus defines grace:

[1] "Anti-Pel. Treat. of St. Aug." Introd., p. x.

"Grace in the Theology of the Church is regarded as a force in the spiritual order, not simply God's unmerited kindness in the abstract, but such kindness in action as a movement of His Spirit within the soul, resulting from the Incarnation, and imparting to the will and affections a new capacity of obedience and love."

What an excellent course of addresses might be given on the clauses of this definition !

If an instruction is of the nature of a theorem, the problem may represent the sermon proper, which has for its object to show us how something is to be rightly done. How to know God, how to follow Christ, how to obtain peace, how to serve my neighbour, how to fulfil my vocation, how to extend Christ's Kingdom, how to cure myself of faults, how to die well, how to deal with temptation, all these great subjects propose to us a building up on solid foundations, until our efforts are united to and hallowed by the great "It is finished" of our Lord.

If there is a difference between the instruction and the sermon proper, there is another sort of utterance included under the general name of sermon, but also claiming its special name of Meditation. Here there is no logical proof; no exhortation armed with the cogency of exhibited possibility; no specific statement of instructive facts. Rather, for the good of the flock, that sacred veil is lifted

which would else conceal the utterances of the pastor's own heart in the presence of God. Speaking "to himself and to God," the pastoral preacher now leads his people with him, not by demonstration or exhortation, but by example and sympathy. The beauty, the expanding richness, the πολυποίκιλος σοφία which belong to the Divine revelation are contemplated by the thought and expressed by the voice. Something of that unfolding which came in the Spirit to St. John at Patmos is granted to him who has learned to meditate alone, and is willing to sacrifice the solitude of his meditation for the sake of his brethren. Something of this kind is the salt of many a sermon; at proper times, before Communion, with a group of the faithful at some time of watching or retirement, at the season or on the weekly day sacred to the Passion of our Lord, Meditation ought to be the valued privilege of the pastor and his people. We have seen that variety may relieve the necessary sameness of the preacher's message if he brings out the treasures of Scripture things new and old, and if his sermons are varied by difference of aim and form.

A third help to variety, and to much besides, will be found in the use of lists or categories extracted from or serving to illustrate Holy Scripture. Such are the three theological virtues, the seven gifts of the Spirit, the seven petitions of

the Lord's Prayer, the ninefold fruit of the Spirit, His three convictions of sin, St. Paul's seven steps of penitence, the five types of the Holy Ghost, the ten Commandments, the eight beatitudes. In treating a scriptural subject any one of these categories may suffice to make it sound in a new key, as its permanent truths are brought into relation with a new set of divine thoughts.

I pass on to other helps of the preacher less closely concerned with variety. First among them I feel I ought to place personal experience, and this especially for the country preacher. I need not say that for simple folk the concrete is always better than the abstract.

It is "truth embodied in a tale" that "shall enter in at lowly doors," and "the loveliness of perfect deeds" is "more strong than all poetic thought"—

> "Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
> Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
> And those wild eyes that watch the wave
> In roarings round the coral reef."

What is thus supremely true of the life of our Lord is true in its measure of the lives of all His servants. Not only His perfect deeds, but our most imperfect acts, redeemed and mended by His grace, supply the "touch of nature." "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago" is a sentence which has its humble counterpart in

the utterances of countless Christian preachers. "Come, ye children, and hearken unto me, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul."

If the preacher begins with his own experience, he has larger and better stores to draw upon. It is his great help as well as his duty to make the communion of saints a reality to his people. Not only the stories of the martyrs, the conversions, words, and wonders of canonised saints, but flowers from all the gardens of biography enrich the preacher's store. Not least are the wonderful things which God has shown him in the lives and deaths to which he has himself ministered.

Another way there is in which the preacher can use the gifts which have been given to others, his brethren in the Church and the ministry. It is not only the inspired and separate words of the Bible, but the wisdom of those who have spoken for God in every age down to our own that comes to my aid when I am preparing to address the people. It is not only that when time and strength and capacity all seem wanting, a man is tempted to transfer a published sermon to his own paper, or at least to introduce large portions into his own composition. I say "tempted," because our consciences will not allow us peacefully to use other men's work to save our labour, and yet in such a way as to avoid the fact becoming known. It is a poor argument to say, 'The words of a great

preacher are better than mine; surely I may substitute his excellent work for my poor work?' The question is not what is most marked by gifts, but what God intends to be said to the people here and now. It is my voice, my witness, my individual interpretation of everlasting truth, that the people are waiting for according to the will of God. It is not the fitness that I can recognize, but the fact of God's call and direction that makes my words the means of blessing for those to whom I am sent.

But, let me repeat it, not only the temptation to misuse, but the opportunity to use lawfully what may be gathered from others, comes to the preacher, and especially the young preacher. To hand on to our people such a definition as that which I quoted from Dr. Bright could be nothing but a great service to them. To lay before them a passage in which some finished teacher has enforced or illustrated a truth which we have not been able to make our own,—to do this candidly is only true wisdom. I remember hearing a man whose sermons have helped many, preach one of a course of week-day sermons which were nothing more than an avowed analysis and explanation of certain sermons of Newman. It is not the use of material which has passed into the possession of the Church, but the unworthy desire to save ourselves trouble, and the more unworthy desire

to conceal our obligations, of which we have need to be ashamed. Whatever best serves the glory of God in the good of His children it will be our duty to do, and we may be sure that forgetfulness of self and zeal for others will be the guardians of our motives. "Non mihi, Domine, sed Tibi; non mihi, Domine, sed populo Tuo."

I have given no advice as to the choice between written and unwritten sermons. Probably such advice must be suited to each individual case. No one will be able to dispense with the help of a manuscript at certain times; no one ought to confine himself to manuscript. There can be no doubt that, in the past, village people for the most part greatly preferred unwritten sermons, partly because they have looked upon utterance as a "gift," more or less sacred and spiritual, but also because the written sermons they have heard have very often been modelled on the published sermons of great preachers who have addressed large or educated congregations. For an admirable example of the style suited to rural listeners, I should like to name Dr. Neale's "Sermons to the Aged," preached in the almshouse of which he was Warden, at East Grinstead. I might add that Mr. Spurgeon's published sermons, though they were doubtless preached without writing, have the rare merit of reading excellently for the simplest audience.

This subject leads to certain thoughts closely connected with rural memories. The country people are keen enough to know when the preacher is thinking of himself rather than of their good. It was a devout and rather gifted man of whom a Somersetshire parishioner said, "He der get up in pulpit, and plaze erself fur farty minutes." It will often be a good and specially conscientious man who will occupy the time when he should be edifying his people, in satisfying himself about some point of doctrine or practice. Perhaps with an educated audience the candour of this method may commend it. They may be interested in looking at a glass hive. But with the country poor no such liberties can be safely taken. You must have the honey on a plate before them. At best our utterances, and still more our compositions, will be in a tongue only partly understood. The most absurd misunderstandings may take place. And yet we need not despair of doing good, even when our words are only partly understood. My own knowledge of conversational French is very slight, but I can catch something of the impression which a French preacher desires to make upon me. That is, I can do so if I wish. And it may not have been realised by all of us that we have very good listeners among the country people. Going to church is often a greater matter to them than we suppose.

It is not only as preachers that we stand in relation to the Bible. We are also to be students. All our studies are to lie that way. I cannot speak of study without shame, and if I am to speak of it at all, it must be with the hope of showing you what may be done by a man to whom, whether or not through his own fault, study must always be a difficulty in which he can only hope to be penitently faithful, not consistently complete. To such a man it is the advice of scholars, most unlike himself, that brings the best help. It is Bishop Westcott who has sketched clerical study of the Bible in a way which demands industry and perseverance rather than the gifts and habits of the scholar. He has advised us to read a book of the Bible twice in the English and twice in the original Hebrew or Greek before we use any commentary. He desires that after our reading we should make written notes of what has most arrested our attention. Such reading will no doubt result in a list of passages for which we need help from others as well as those on which we have been able to gain something of our own.

To this advice of your great Cambridge teacher I will venture to add that of an Oxford Bishop, to whom I owe the fruitful suggestion that on a second or later reading of a book of the Bible it is well to have in mind one of the great mysteries of the faith for which we seek illustration.

May I add that for those of us who do not know Hebrew—and, indeed, I imagine for all—the arrangement of Young's "Analytical Concordance," where each English word is shown in relation to its various equivalents, is of great value? May I further incite anyone who has not done it already, to examine the marginal references to the Revised Bible?

I have already referred to Meditation as the name of one kind of sermon, and as one chief point in the pastor's rule of life. The time has come now for me to speak of it as the most important of all the ways in which we can use Holy Scripture. It is to this use that reading and study lead, and by this that they are hallowed; not only that kind of sermon which borrows its name, but every sort of preaching is helped by meditation. Allow me a few wonted remarks by way of preface to this great subject.

Doubtless many persons practise meditation, and that often with great profit, who have never known it by that name.

Meditation is very seldom without difficulty, but if the difficulty is faced it is never without profit.

Meditation is the union of Bible-reading and prayer.

This last statement is true, but it is not the best definition of meditation. I would rather say, meditation is the process by which the spirit of

man is fed by the Word of God. The process of the preparation of this spiritual food may be regarded as analogous to the preparation of bodily food.

In order to give us a meal, the person who prepares it must collect the materials, transmute and prepare them by the action of fire and water, and then present them for active and nutritious assimilation. In like manner the food of the soul must be secured by the memory, dealt with by Him Who is the Divine Fire and the Water of Life in the understanding, and appropriated eagerly by the will.

The three parts may be connected with three plain words—Remember, Consider, Resolve: remember as to the past what is yours already; consider as to the present what you can learn about God and about yourself; resolve as to what you will do, or what practice you will renew in honour of our Lord. A very beautiful description of these three parts of meditation will be found, together with a similar treatise on the private recitation of the daily offices, in a little book called "The Priest in his Inner Life," by the late Canon Liddon.

I may venture to say that the essay was written early in Dr. Liddon's career for his Cuddesdon pupils. Perhaps in later life, or certainly if he had been writing for men who had not yet entered

a theological college, he would have rather insisted on one or two meditations in the week than one every day. Dr. Alfred Mortimer's "Helps to Meditation," contained in two separate volumes, price 7s. 6d. each, give beginners almost too much help. Later on the Bible itself, approached with prayer to the Holy Spirit, and a review of a man's position before God, will supply the best subjects for meditation. Paper and pencil are always, or nearly always, a help; for to note the points gained in the exercise tends to strengthen the realisation and to keep the faculties alert.

The relation of the pastor to the Bible will therefore be fourfold—in reading, in preaching, in study, in meditation.

Thus equipped and disciplined, not only will he be able to minister God's message, but he will find in that message an unfailing link with his people. So far as they are religious at all, and sometimes when their religion is at a very low point, English people love the Bible. A pastor who loves it also will be loved by them. They will bear with his corrections of their uninstructed conceptions, if they can feel by instinct that the Word is the light of his own life. Those needed corrections ought not to interfere with time-honoured customs connected with the Bible. I fear we are in danger of losing the habit of learning the Bible by heart.

That a man can read is no cause for depriving him of the treasure of Scripture in his memory, so hallowing to thought, such a companion in solitude, so ready a weapon of help to others. May I add a word of caution about small print? Publishers delight in producing Testaments and Prayer Books for the waistcoat pocket, but many of us have eyes that cannot use them. Much more is this the case with those to whom reading is not quite easy. It is a matter of constant wonder to me that the small editions of the books of the Bible, in excellent print, published by the S.P.C.K. and the Bible Society, are so little known. A copy of St. John's Gospel, quite easy to the eye, is far more likely to be used than a New Testament of the same size in painful print. Only quite lately the Oxford University Press has given us several books of the Bible, reprinted from the Octavo Revised Version, and supplied with the excellent marginal references which have been added, at a later date than that of its first appearance, to that version.

V

THE PASTOR IN HIS RELATION TO THE PRAYER BOOK

THE Prayer Book is not, like the Bible, ceremonially given to us at our ordination, but we are required to declare that the doctrine of the Church of England contained in it, as well as in the Thirty-Nine Articles, is "agreeable to the Word of God," and we have to promise "in public prayer and administration of the sacraments to use the form in the Common Prayer Book prescribed, and none other, except so far as shall be ordered by lawful authority."

The universal toleration of the large use of hymns, chosen by the parish priest and not forbidden by the Bishop, seems capable of agreement with this promise only if we take "other form" to mean such form as would supplant or rival the appointed form. The lawful authority of the Ordinary may be taken to sanction such generally-allowed deviations from the strict letter of the Prayer Book as the omission of the long address to the communicants at many celebrations.

With these modifications the rule and promise have all the force which belongs to rules lately recast, and seriously enforced by the Bishops.

What we mainly find in the Prayer Book are directions for Divine worship and administration of the means of grace.

We have already thought of the Eucharist and the Psalter in their place in the priest's life; we have now to think of them as the vehicles of Divine worship.

The great charter of Christian worship finds its first expression in the words, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them," and if we look for an explanation in the gospels of what is meant by the limitation, "in My Name," we shall only find the indication of a reply in the words used by our Lord at the institution of the Eucharist, "Do this in remembrance of Me." It is not then too much to say that all Christian worship is to be offered to God Almighty in connexion with the making of the Sacrament, or in harmony therewith. If, following the steps of Christian antiquity and the undivided Church, we apply the name of Sacrifice to that act, we shall find a phrase suited to our instincts in the "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving" mentioned in our liturgy. It is not as a mere appendage or department of our worship that

we use the Holy Eucharist, but as the very centre of our worship.

This is, I think, true in spite of differences in theory and practice as to this matter, and it may be well to review briefly the changing customs which have surrounded the great Christian act.

In the earliest times the approach to God was that of the whole Church by oblation and communion. In the earliest detailed accounts which we possess of the bearing of discipline upon worship, we find the catechumens whose membership in the Church was still future, and those under penance whose membership was impaired, joining in certain prayers, after which they were dismissed, or in the case of those nearest to restoration, remaining for the whole act, but without reception.

Later, a large number of the faithful began to put themselves voluntarily into the place of penitents, and did not receive. At the end of the Middle Ages, communion had come to be very rare, and a tendency had arisen to treat the oblation as a separate sacrifice, the value of which could be stated numerically.

After the Reformation, attendance without communion, though not forbidden, tended to die out, and thus, not only those who neglected communion, but the unconfirmed children, ceased to have any share in the complete Christian act of

worship, and the recitation of the Psalter, instead of being supplementary and preparatory to the Eucharist, came to be used as a substitute for the sacrifice of the Lord's Day.

The revival of the last seventy years has included the claim to be present on behalf of children, of those who have received already in the day, and of those who desire to associate themselves with penitents preparing for communion.

Whatever our view of this claim may be, it may be taken as generally recognized that the Eucharist is the chief Christian service, the appropriate, if not for us, in view of the requirements of the Prayer Book and canons, the necessary act of Sunday worship, and that communion is its living centre.

Further, it will be admitted that, while we recognize the work of the Holy Spirit apart from all sacraments, where they cannot be had, either through unavoidable circumstances or even through ignorance which does not involve moral blame, the central aim of our pastoral duty is to bring all under our care, first to a good communion, in which true union through faith and contact with God in Christ is secured, and afterwards to all the blessings of increasing love and knowledge which belong to communions advancing to perfection. The central act of worship is also the central means of grace, and the greater

part of the Prayer Book is grouped around it for the purposes of preparation and assimilation.

The preparation begins with baptism, which is normally under our circumstances the baptism of infants, public or private, the essentials for which are the use of water, as distinct from any other liquid, and the words "I baptize thee in name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The Church also ordains that the child shall be dipped in the water, or else the water poured upon the child, and that at public baptism, and on the reception into the Church of those who have been privately baptized, three persons shall be provided as sponsors.

The direction to pour the water in baptism is not without importance. The sect who refuse baptism to infants, and assume on that account the name of Baptists, deride the mode of administration by "sprinkling" which has no sanction in the Prayer Book, but has been the result of simple carelessness, and the English Roman Catholics require conditional rebaptism on the ground that, when sprinkling only is aimed at, there may be no contact with the flowing water. It may be well to mention this, not only to suggest the need of care in pouring, which is much more certainly and conveniently done with a shell than with the bare hand, but also to note what our attitude should be, if we find persons scrupulous, as to whether they have

been validly baptized. Such persons may be told that if there is serious doubt as to the contact of the water with the child to be baptized, the baptism should be repeated conditionally, but that if the child has been brought to church to be baptized, and since obedience to the rule of the Church insures a valid baptism, no scruple need be felt as to the possible carelessness of the minister. Such a scruple is of the kind which has been made a ground for throwing doubt upon the sacraments of the Universal Church, and the reply to such a suggestion is that since the Divine institution subjects the administration of sacraments to human frailty, we may trust, after reasonable care, to the Divine protection. With the poured water must be used the needful words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It is well to remember that in the case of a dying infant or penitent believer, nothing more than the appointed words or form and the appointed instrument or matter, namely, water, are necessary. Instruction on this point is not only needed by ourselves, but should be conveyed to all members of the Church, inasmuch as in case of necessity anyone may baptize. The opposition to this rule of the Western Church by the Puritans, on the ground that it pointed too much to the necessity of baptism, led to the omission of definite instruction as to the duty of midwives and others in the rubric; but it

will be observed that, though one of the questions to be asked, when a child is brought to be received into the Church, is, "By whom was this child baptized?" and although, "any lawful minister that may be procured" is mentioned as the proper substitute for the "minister of the parish," yet the form of question confines "things essential to this sacrament" to the matter and form.

A more difficult question is that of the necessity of sponsors. The Prayer Book orders that there shall be two godfathers and one godmother for every male child, and two godmothers and one godfather for every female child. Canon XXIX further enacts that these sponsors must be communicants. It is to be remembered with regard to all requirements about communicants that the compilers of the Prayer Book assumed that every adult subject of the Sovereign would be a communicant, and that if anyone refused the sacred duty, and did not amend after warning and excommunication, he would eventually find himself in prison.

In the very different state of things now existing we are compelled to look behind the law to its motive and purpose. We find that the sponsors were meant to secure the proper instruction of the baptized child, and that in the case of the private baptism of a dying infant no sponsors were required.

The present practice in large towns is to be content with one sponsor, or even with none at all. In the country the difficulty takes another form. It is not so hard to obtain sponsors as to secure that the sponsors shall be proper persons. The small number of communicants, especially of male communicants, hardly allows us to enforce the canon, but the power remaining with us to do so may be used to exclude from the sacred duty any person of notorious evil life.

If in any case we baptize a child not in danger of death, without sponsors, the responsibility lies with us of being assured that the child will be taught the Christian faith. It is hardly too much to say that, where no really proper sponsor is provided, the parish priest who accepts the child without such sponsor is himself morally responsible as if he were himself the child's godfather.

When the child has been baptized, and if not as soon as the baptism has taken place, yet much sooner than is often supposed, the work of instruction in faith and morals begins. That is, it begins, or most certainly ought to begin, with the parents, or at least in the home. Our duty to baptized children does not begin at the time when they come under our direct care; we ought to be instant in season and out of season in warning parents of their duty.

The moral justification of infant baptism lies in

the great advantage to the child of being taught its privileges and position from the first. We must not allow a mother, without protest from us, to refuse to teach a little child what it cannot understand. Just as she teaches the child to call its father by a familiar name, and then gradually leads the child to all that the name implies, so ought she to do with the Holy Name of Jesus. Am I not right in saying that to give an account of the story of the Nativity, and then to say, "That little child was the Son of God," is far from being the best way of beginning Church teaching, because such a method brings the thought of our Lord before the child's mind as if He were a stranger? Better far, surely, for the mother to say, "I am going to tell you how our Lord was born." If the child replies, "Who is our Lord?" the priceless opportunity is given to say, "He is our best friend, and though we cannot see Him, He is more to us than any friend that we can see."

Our relation to baptized children is almost exactly expressed in the words of St. Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin: "Hail [χαῖρε, be happy], thou that art highly favoured; the Lord is with thee"; and following on this, as the answer to all modest and awe-struck questionings, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee."

It is at home as well as at school (and in the

future it is likely that in many more cases than in the past it will be at home only) that the Catechism should be learned. In country places we are in difficulty from time to time as to the instruction of children in remote farms and cottages, whom it is impossible to get regularly to Sunday-school. A shilling is not badly spent as a reward for the Catechism copied without a mistake from the Prayer Book into a copy-book, and if two or three copies have to be made in the winter evenings before the perfect transcript is attained, so much better will the Catechism be known.

Much just praise is bestowed on the simplicity, depth, felicity of the Catechism. Forgive me if I dare to point out certain directions in which it needs to be supplemented.

Ought not a child before confirmation to know what he means by the supreme word "God"? Is it quite in proportion to teach excellently the two parts of the Lord's Supper and not to teach the two natures of our Lord? Does not the word "Incarnation" occupy so special a place as to make us wish to teach and explain it before theological terms in general are brought before our children? Is the one word "sanctify" enough to express the work of the Holy Spirit? Have we not lost much by the habit of teaching the doctrine of the sacraments in an isolated manner, which their position in the Catechism does noth-

ing to correct? If a soul needing all things is first led to seek for the position of those whom we find in the gospels brought into a right relation to our Lord, and then taught that the other Paraclete secures the same blessings for us here and now, the sacraments will come naturally in their place as the ordinary instruments of the Spirit Who is always needed.

This at any rate is true, that our work of teaching children between baptism and confirmation is the sphere where each pastor must first define for himself that version of the one universal faith which his own individuality witnesses to and uses.

I can never forget the encouragement which came to me from the reply of a learned friend, of whom I asked if it was wrong for a man to put the body of Church teaching into his own form. I asked rather diffidently, and I was told, "It was what everyone did in old times. Each man made his own 'Summa'; the 'Summa' of St. Thomas was only a specially good 'Summa.' It is with your confirmation candidates that you have first to use, perhaps first to make, your Summa, and all baptized children are candidates for confirmation. A thought has often come to me during the inevitable discussions on Church education in the last few years. Do not let me seem to depreciate those discussions, nor the duty of contending to

the utmost for all that helps us to teach the faith to our children. Nevertheless the thought comes and recurs: No facilities will avail much without zealous teachers; zealous teachers will effect much in spite of any loss of facilities. If the days are evil, we must be ready to buy up our opportunity whenever it comes. If we have a short time in which to teach, we must not waste it over the kings of Judah, or even the journeys of St. Paul, but take care that the doctrines—the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the work of the Spirit, the Sacraments, the claim of the Church, Catholic, Scriptural, Reformed—are put before our children. We shall not be responsible for what we cannot do, but if we have short and precious opportunities and do not use them because we have not thought out what we have to teach, the blame will be ours.

In day-schools, Sunday-schools, catechisms, children's services, individual talks with mothers and teachers, we must be always sowing the good seed. Children and the poor are to be saved and blessed by the same means by which we ourselves are to be saved and blessed. We have not to invent another religion for them, but only to put into simple forms and words the truths on which we ourselves rely. Is it necessary to remind you that our duty is not only to the children of the poor? The splendid service which English clergy

have given to the whole education of the poor, secular as well as religious, tends sometimes to confuse the issue. It is not our business to help the public-school boys or the high-school girls in our parishes in their classics and science as we help the ploughboys with their sums, but the cultured young need to be taught the truths of faith quite as much as the schoolboys—indeed, rather more, for they are in danger of being led away by false lights if they have not the true light.

If we are in the happy position of having taught our children the main truths of the faith before they come to our confirmation classes, these great opportunities can first be used for a recapitulation and exhibition in coherent relation of truth already taught, and then, when the head work has been adequately dealt with, comes the time for the preparation of the heart. If I venture to make some suggestions as to preparation for confirmation, may I say that I do so as addressing those who will ultimately be themselves in charge of parishes or districts? I am not suggesting that a deacon or an assistant priest will even desire to interfere with the plans he finds in use. Under almost any plan the essential work can be done, but there are plans, especially in the country, which, when practicable, bring us help. In old-fashioned country places there is a custom of

bringing children to confirmation, and some kind of preparation classes will be expected. What will not be expected is the teaching of conversion, of first communion as following upon confirmation, of the offer of confession as part of the preparation for first communion. Round these three points the difficulty will chiefly lie.

By conversion I mean that conscious relation of faith and self-surrender to our Lord as Saviour and Life-giver, which carries with it a true renunciation of sin and an acceptance of the known will of God in all things.

I know that the most perfect conversion is that which has its indistinguishable beginnings in the loving response of the baptized child to the first teachings and convictions of the Holy Spirit, and I know that in many cases which fall short of this perfect ideal, the true relation has come about without any definable moment of change.

But I think I shall carry you with me if I say that wherever a soul is in right relation to our Lord, that relation will be recognized as resulting from a gift lifting the will and the affections above nature and fixing them upon Him; and further, that in a large number of cases a conversion from bad to good, like that of St. Paul, or from good to better, like that of St. John, stands out in the history of the soul's life.

I think any true pastor, himself seeking to be

right with God, will find among his candidates for confirmation, more or less discernible, three classes. First, there will be, if God so wills it, some eager, loving children, perhaps, like Mary, troubled in their minds at the greatness of the prospect, but only needing to be encouraged to give a confident and adoring welcome to the gift of the enabling Spirit. In contrast to these, and yet, as the work of grace advances, closely akin to them in spiritual perception, are those who have fallen deeply into sin, and to whom the preparation for confirmation means a return from darkness to light. But while all three classes may shade off into each other—and we must not expect to be able to assign to one or the other each individual candidate—there will be a third group, more or less defined, who belong to neither of the classes already mentioned. They will seem neutral. The conviction may be strong upon your mind that it would not be right to accuse them, or to go near accusing them, of concealing sin, or refusing to face it; nothing troubles their consciences, yet there is an absence of response. There is nothing to be said against them, but nothing to be said for them. Thus in the close quarters of preparation for confirmation you become acquainted with a class which is never far from you in your parish work—the class of those who need awakening or conversion. They are free from grave sins of com-

mission; it is possible that a grave overt act of disobedience might startle them into active penitence, and so help them towards God; their fault is a negative fault—it is the dull refusal to seek, it is deafness to the Divine call, blindness to the attraction of Jesus. To analyse their present condition is most difficult. Probably there has been a refusal of inward suggestion of which no consciousness remains in the mind. We may hope that this refusal is not wilful, and that the dormant grace of baptism is not quenched. We may hope that if actual sin of commission is absent, the soul may stand in a true relation to God which we cannot probe, not unlike that of one whose intellect is defective; but our duty is clear. Prayer, fellowship, the exhibition of the Person of our Lord, these are our weapons. Nor only shall we pray for these neutral characters with special insistence, we shall take pains to draw them into sharing the words of prayer which some of our group are keenly following. It is for this fellowship that the combined class has its advantages. Some of those who have taken much pains of late years to improve the preparation for confirmation have in reaction from the formality of classes which made little impression, laid down the rule that each candidate must be prepared singly. No doubt if we were compelled to choose between general classes only, and private interviews only,

we ought to prefer the interviews; but the sense of fellowship, the power of example, and the warmth of united prayer will not allow us (as it seems to me) to lay the classes aside. Moreover, they are a great help to the extreme shyness of young people in the country. When notice is given of the Bishop's intention to confirm, public opinion will support the united candidature of boys and girls of fourteen or fifteen. Here and there a boy or girl will need the encouragement of a special invitation, and if the pastor desires to present some children of earlier age, he will have to conduct a somewhat difficult negotiation. No doubt many children of ten, or even less, can satisfy the requirements of the Church; but, on the other hand, the development common to all Western Christendom, which has taken the confirmation of children in good health away from infancy, is a far greater change from earlier use than the later change from the age of reason to the age when childhood is passing into youth. It is almost startling to find that in 1240 the Council of Worcester forbids parents to enter the Church if their children are not confirmed within a year after birth, and that in 1287 the Council of Exeter extended the age to three years, and that Queen Elizabeth was confirmed at six days old.

A fortnight will not be too long after the first notice in Church to get the class together. If

parents and god-parents are invited to attend, they should not sit amongst the candidates, for whom special places should be reserved in the front of the nave or in an aisle or chapel. Such an invitation will probably bring some of the most devout, and if the instructions of the parish priest have been heard by his assistants, clergy, or lay people, they can be enforced in private interviews. At the end of the class, appointments should be made with each candidate for a private interview either with the priest who has given the instruction, or someone acting for him. This interview should not consist chiefly of questions, especially at first. Like the class in church, it will begin with prayer, and a chief aim in the first interview is to secure that the candidate shall offer devout daily prayer during the preparation. The question, "Do you say your prayers?" may lead to a falsehood, and such a falsehood may vitiate the whole preparation, or at least destroy its peace. "What prayers do you say?" is hardly safer. Later on, "What prayers have you been taught to say?" is an almost necessary question, but at the first interview it is far better to say, "I want you to say this, with your other prayers, every day till the confirmation." "This" may be the Collect for the 19th Sunday after Trinity, or the *Veni Creator*, or even, for an ignorant child, the first line of that great hymn.

If the heads of the class-addresses are type-written, they may be produced at the interview, and the chief points emphasised, and so gradually conversation about the instruction already received may grow up. But throughout, "Let me show you," is a far better formula than "Now tell me." I venture to think that the right management of these interviews is the most difficult matter which a young priest has to face, more difficult to my mind than dealing with the sick and dying. It is very easy to do too little; it is not impossible to do too much. It will be too little if I have not done my best to secure four things: (1) that the candidate shall have claimed the right of faith by an act of hopeful and loving self-surrender; (2) that the outline of the Christian religion resting on this faith shall be grasped; (3) that wilful sin shall be cancelled by true repentance; (4) that prayer shall be real. The outline of religion will at least include a realisation that the Bible and the Holy Communion are to be used by the help of the Holy Spirit, and that membership of the Church of England is valued as distinct from being a Roman Catholic, or what the country child will know as a Dissenter, and that every Christian should know his pastor. Much more than this can be effected under favourable circumstances. If we are ourselves convinced that the Reformed Catholic position of the Anglican Church is the

best representation of the true Christian ideal and of the primitive and undivided Church, we shall wish to make our children conscious of the nature of Primitive Episcopacy, Roman usurpation, the Reformation, and the Catholic Revival in England. We shall wish to teach that our quarrel with Dissenters is that their Church ways are defective and their separation unjustifiable, at least for us; but that we ourselves are forced to be Dissenters from the national establishment, both in Scotland and on the Continent.

There remains the securing of a right relation to sin, and in that connexion both the use in preparation for confirmation, and the teaching as part of Prayer Book doctrine, of confession, and absolution. Let me recall the facts of the case. The commission of our Lord to the Church, and especially to the apostles, to judge sinners with a view to their secure pardon, is no doubt wider than what is included in the offer of private confession and absolution as the chief aid to securing the effectual repentance and pardon of the baptized. The power is used in admission to baptism, and the principle of which the direct power is the conspicuous use, enters into the meaning of all Church prayers for the sinful members of the Church, such as are emphasised in the forms of absolution in the public services.

Again, the method of using in private the judicial

power given by our Lord for the reconciliation of penitents represents for us the primitive administration of penance. The power has always appeared as an auxiliary and secondary power, framed by the Divine Wisdom to give assistance to the necessary self-judgment of the penitent in the power of the Holy Spirit, which is the primary and indispensable condition of pardon.

Further, the extension of the private use of penance, so as to make it a necessary and universal part of the Christian life, was distinctly laid aside by the Bishops who represented the Reformed English Church in the framing of the Prayer Book.

Lastly, while the administration of penance in the form of private confession and absolution to those who seek it, has traditional authority in the Reformed Communion, is supported by our present formularies, and appears to many of us to be a means of grace which, if it be permissible at all, must under many conditions of our ministry assume great prominence, we are able to recognize that the essential judgment, under the terms of our Lord's institution, may be effectually administered, where the usual mode, and even the prescribed form of hearing confession and granting absolution are not followed.

Having said this, I think I shall but discharge my duty if I offer you the results of such experi-

ence as has come to me while for more than thirty years I have sought to make full proof of this part of my ministry. It is convenient to do it in connexion with confirmation, though I may have something to add when I speak of the Visitation of the Sick.

When a true pastor faces his group of confirmation candidates, he feels, as he must often feel when he looks from the pulpit, the momentous truth that to the eye of God each of those before him is, at each moment, of such a character, and in such relation to God, that if at that moment death came and probation ended, the soul would be fixed in salvation or in condemnation. With the baptized children he would fain hope that he may use our Lord's words and say, "Now ye are clean," but he knows that it is possible that he ought to complete them and say, "but not all." If it be only one for whom all depends on the greatest of changes, what is so deeply needed for that one will not be unsuited to the rest, for there is no greater blessing than that which comes with a deeper sense of sins of infirmity.

It will probably be in connexion with the doctrine of creation that sin will be first brought home to the candidates. Hitherto sin has probably meant to them only disobedience. Now it comes before them in the deeper aspect of

refusal of the Divine purpose. When the Passion of our Lord is reached, sin will again have come forward as the cause of all suffering, and as finding its remedy in the Cross. Then the explanation of the Ten Commandments brings back the familiar thought of disobedience in a deeper light than before. The application of the great lines of Divine law needs the best knowledge we can obtain of the particular circumstances of our children. If our teaching must perforce relieve some of the quasi-Judaic views of the Fourth Commandment which have a strong hold on the English mind, we must be careful to give due weight to the authority of a reverence and self-denial which, if not part of Christ's law, has become a custom with good Christian results amongst ourselves. We ought to know what are the usual temptations to dishonesty, and what are the places and practices most connected with occasions of sin. When we come to the Seventh Commandment, we can give to the whole class the instruction which makes them look upon marriage as a holy thing, dear to God, so that any injury of it or any breach of its law will be gravely sinful; but further teaching as to the Divine purpose of the body and its powers must be given separately and individually to the boys, and will be best given, so far as is needful, by mothers or well-selected female teachers to the girls. The

desire to think only of the preservation of their innocence and ignorance of sin is almost overwhelming, but it is certain that there are places and circumstances which make plain speaking, even to girls, nothing less than necessary.

But with regard to this whole matter two things may be remembered, which relieve the strain. First, the teaching of purity is better than the teaching of impurity, and purity means purpose. The words, "A body hast thou prepared me," attributed to our Lord Himself, lift the Seventh Commandment into the sphere where the use and possibilities of the body, along with that sacred repression which so largely took the place of use in the case of our Lord, occupy the ground and preclude the entrance of sin.

Secondly, we are helped by the application of this principle to the use of food and drink. "We do not live to eat, but eat to live," throws light on the *vitanda tacenda* which lie beyond.

If the place of Confession in the Prayer Book system has been made clear in the addresses, I do not think it is usually necessary to ask each child if he or she desires it. Though allowance must be made for the great shyness of the country people, which demands all help that can be given, it will probably be enough to tell each child at what time the priest may be found if confession is desired. Though I have used them in days gone

by, my present judgment would incline to deprecate, at any rate, the general use of printed questions of self-examination. Nor do I think that, where the child wishes for confession, I should now, as I once did, hand girls over to a lady to be prepared, and to have her confession written out for her.

It is not difficult to help anyone who really desires the judgment of the Church upon sin, to discover what can be remembered as really imperilling the union of the soul with God through wilful rebellion. Nor is it difficult to bring into view those lesser sins, as to which what is chiefly needed is watchfulness, lest they grow into greater sins.

When the confirmation day is quite close at hand, the words and arrangement of the service should be considered with the children. I have assumed that something much more than the mere explanation of the doctrine of confirmation must be aimed at in the course of instructions. Each child ought to receive in them an outline of the Christian religion. But towards the end a careful preparation should be made for the events of the confirmation day. In many country places it is not a very long time since the confirmation was looked upon very much in the light of a holiday expedition to the market town, and, quite lately, I have known a girl unwilling to be confirmed

when the Bishop was coming to her parish church, because she would lose the day's outing. It will be seen that care and pains must be taken to explain the details of the service, and to arrange for a quiet and orderly conveyance to the church. The employment of the time when others are being confirmed is a matter requiring attention. Perhaps the simplest direction is that each should read through the 119th Psalm, and pause over any verses that seem suited for his own prayers.

The spiritual equipment of the young members of the Church ought to include some teaching about private prayer. The only addition I should desire to make to the use of the Prayer Book and hymn-book would be some simple acts of faith, hope, and charity. But it is an excellent thing to underline, in red ink, such parts of the Prayer Book as are suitable for daily use. The preparation for confirmation ought to lead on to some special classes after confirmation for first communion. These would include an explanation of the Lord's Prayer, if it has not been already given, and an explanation of the Communion Service. Whatever difficulties may be felt as to the general restoration of access to the Eucharist, whenever it is celebrated, for all baptized persons, whether intending to receive at the time or not, objection can hardly be felt to the presence of the newly-confirmed two or three times before they receive.

It can hardly be anything but a help, from any devout point of view, if after their first communion they try to be present when they can at the celebration, with the hope of at last becoming weekly communicants.

We must be brave in setting before our people the standard of life and worship which answers to our principles, while we make every charitable allowance for defective attainment. Perseverance in Holy Communion, with all that it implies, is the aim to which our whole care of our adult people must be directed. For it implies the maintenance, by assistance of the Holy Spirit, of the love of God and man, and those activities of service and fellowship which spring from that love.

All our Sunday and week-day services, all our visits, all our sermons, have this end, and if our congregations were wholly or mostly communicants, if our Prayer Book services were more elastic, and if the tradition of the communion as the expression of the Churchman's faith, and the nourishment of his hope and love, had remained unbroken, we should perhaps need nothing more.

As it is, we cannot forget the advantage of meetings for communicants, which will follow naturally on the course of classes by which they were first led to communion.

Of these meetings there are perhaps three sorts

in use: (i) Meetings for different sorts of persons, either combined in one monthly class-week, after which we aim at a large communion, or divided into four classes allotted to four weeks of the month, and encouraging those who have been present to receive on the following Sunday, so that on one Sunday you would expect the older men, on the next the younger men, then the older, and lastly, the younger women; or (ii) a monthly class for all communicants together; or (iii) a more public and general class before the Great Festivals.

It has been thought by some who have preferred the separate classes that great advantage flows from the special invitation for these occasions. This, however, lays us open to the danger of neglecting some who would wish to be invited, and also offending some who do not think that membership in the Church ought to entail such a personal invitation.

Perhaps one or two general classes for women at suitable hours on week-days, and a men's preparation class on the Sunday afternoon previous to their Communion Sunday, is the best arrangement.

I do not think anyone who has tried them will doubt the advantage of these classes. The preacher, who has felt restrained by the presence of those whose profession of faith is imperfect

from saying all he wished to say in the pulpit, has here his opportunity. Instruction and practice in intercession, teaching directed to a better understanding of Church doctrine, the adaptation of the teaching of feasts and festivals to the enrichment of Holy Communion, these are among the advantages which it is easy to write down. But far beyond these are the links indescribable which are formed between those who find refuge, strength, and comfort in these times of prayer and enlightenment.

Like all good things, communion classes have their dangers. They are not as wide as communion itself. Here and there you will find a few persons for whom they are not fitted, perhaps especially among the lads. Indeed, in many country parishes it is hardly too much to say that every communion which a lad makes until he is about twenty is as much a matter of special decision and preparation as his first communion. Public opinion may be strong against him; the public opinion of lads means much to a lad, and it is almost by stealth that his communion must be arranged and made.

Before I leave this great subject, may I plead for elasticity in the hours of communion? Eight o'clock on Sunday is doubtless the best time for persons in easy circumstances, but to call it an early hour for most of the country poor is a simple

mistake. Seven, six, even five, will each suit a few for whom no other hour is convenient. A celebration at seven, or better perhaps at six, on Monday will often suit those for whom Sunday is the only day of religious leisure for preparation, and who may be working hard, as butchers are, up to or beyond midnight on Saturday.

I have already said something about marriage. I must defer the Visitation of the Sick to take its place, as indeed it has a right to do, among the chief opportunities of the pastor.

VI

THE OPPORTUNITIES OF THE PASTOR

IN my first lecture I spoke of joy and sorrow as the great opportunities of the pastor, and I asked leave to defer a more detailed consideration of the Order for the Visitation of the Sick, from which this thought about joy or sorrow is derived. With this Order are connected three things, each of which is a great opportunity—visiting, sickness, and individual dealing with souls.

Visiting is among the most popular of our duties. A very large number of English people are at their best when in any way they have to play the host. If it were only because it is expected of us, we should have to visit. But there is much more reason for it than that. By visiting we get to know our people. If it is impossible for us to find the men at home, unless they are ill, they will take visits paid to their wives as made to themselves. We enter into the house of Zacharias and salute Elizabeth. So we are consoled when the educated man says, "My wife would have been so glad to see you; I am afraid

she is out to-day," with the implied assumption that he himself cannot be the object of our visit; or when the poor man projects his head and shirt-sleeves from the door, and remarks, in the same spirit, "My missus isn't in, sir; perhaps you'd call another day."

I need hardly say that, if we expect them to be hosts, we must behave as guests. We must retire if a meal is going on; we must ignore anything the recognition of which could cause pain; we must accept the courtesies of the poor. It must not surprise us if we have to call many times before an opportunity arises for prayer, or even for deep religious conversation. And yet we must always be ready for these, always able to pass without constraint to the highest needs of the soul.

When a plan of visiting has been made, and the blessing of God asked upon it, we may confidently hope that we shall find ourselves in the right place at the right time, and our intentions should not be too lightly changed. A friend of mine had left his house intending to ask one of his choirmen to do something for him. He paused at the door of the man's house, and in obedience to an inclination for which he could give no reason, he went to another member of the choir instead. If he had entered the house he had first thought of, he would have found his friend in the act of writing a letter, which he left

behind him when he went out of his house to commit suicide. The Divine guidance is indeed about our path.

It is one of the advantages of habitual visiting that the parson's visit to a sick man is not taken as meaning that he is not likely to recover. Where the parson is a stranger to the house, that interpretation is likely to be put upon a suggestion that he should be sent for, or even upon his admission to the sick-room when he calls.

To be able to enter as a friend, or as one whose visit is taken for granted throughout the parish, is of the greatest advantage. Even where this is not the case, and the pastor has to come as a stranger, it is certain that the Divine work is the best introduction. After a very few words of greeting and sympathy, the sick man will be relieved rather than disquieted by the offer of some simple words of prayer, asking that comfort and blessing may be bestowed, and that God's will may be done. Such a prayer will give the right tone to the conversation which follows.

The Prayer Book Order of Visitation is much more than this. It is a manual for dealing with the needs of a single soul, which is based on lines no less fit for the whole than for the sick. The Canon allows all clergy who are preachers to vary the use of it, and probably it is seldom that we shall use it from beginning to end as it stands.

The occasion when such a use may be what is most suitable would perhaps be found if one of us is called to minister to some person who, by age or position, is our acknowledged superior. In such a case we ought of course to rely on our commission, and forget self. Perhaps the use of the service, just as it stands in the Prayer Book, may help others, as it once helped me, in such a moment of difficulty.

Much more often the sequence of thought which the Order contains will supply us with a sequence of prayers and instructions for many visits, while familiarity with its meaning will enable us to go straight to the points of highest importance when time is short.

I will venture, then, to ask you to consider the structure of the service.

It begins with a definite aim, the securing of peace, expressed in the salutation which, if not audibly, yet as a secret ejaculation, the minister is to use as he enters the sick man's house, "Peace be to this house, and to all that dwell in it."

We cannot limit this great aim to anything less than peace with God, peace with my neighbour, and peace with myself. After setting before us this aim, the point of view from which we are to enter upon the work is suggested by the opening prayers. They contain references to three realities which are often ignored, but which we specially

need to bring forward in beginning the work of peace. They are the reality of sin, the reality of redemption through the Precious Blood of the Atonement, and the reality of the personal enemy.

"Remember not, Lord, our offences."

"Spare Thy people whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious blood."

"Let the enemy have no advantage of him, nor the wicked approach to hurt him."

Next comes the method by which peace is to be sought, as it is set forth in the Exhortations and following rubrics.

The Exhortation begins with a great thought. Sickness, like all else that moves man, is to be attributed to the visitation of God, which has a double object—the improvement of what is good, and the expulsion or reformation of what is bad. Six conditions are enumerated as necessary to this mode of turning a curse into a blessing, namely, faith, repentance, patience, humility, thankfulness, and submission.

It will be seen at once how suitable all these points are to form the subjects of a series of visits, illustrated as each may be from Holy Scripture.[1]

[1] Faith—Matt. xvi. 17; Eph. ii. 8; 1 John iv. 13, 14; 1 Cor. xii. 3; Heb. xi.; John iii. 16; Matt. xi. 28-30. Repentance—Isa. i. 16, 17; lvii. 15-21; Luke xv.; James iv. 8-10; 11 Cor. vii. 10, 11; Rev ii. 4, 5; iii. 2, 3, 20. Patience—ii. Cor. iv. 16-18; 1 Peter ii. 20-24. Humility—Matt. viii. 8; Ps. cxxxi; Luke xviii. 9-14. Thankfulness—Luke xvii. 15-19; Eph. v. 20. Submission—Ps. xxxi. 5; Luke xxiii. 46; i. 38; xxii. 42.

But the second part of the Exhortation carries the method higher still. Suffering, as the visitation of God, exhibits Him as a Father: it is the chastisement of sons. This is seen most of all in the acts of Christ, the only-begotten Son. Our relation to Him as our Head and our Example is set forth in words which deserve to be better known than they are.

"There should be no greater comfort to Christian persons than to be made like unto Christ, by suffering patiently adversities, troubles, and sicknesses. For He Himself went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain; He entered not into His glory before He was crucified. So truly our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ; and our door to enter into eternal life is gladly to die with Christ; that we may rise again from death, and dwell with Him in everlasting life."

Assuming that this union with Christ began with baptism, the Order proceeds to set before us four heads of examination as to our faithfulness to the place in which we were put at our baptism. The four tests are faith, repentance, a right relation to the creatures of God, and the possible need of private confession.

The reply to the interrogative form of the Apostles' Creed—"All this I steadfastly believe"—may need further help to bring out the living desire of trust in our Lord, as the revealer of the

Father and the giver of the Holy Ghost. With our country people there will seldom be—perhaps I should rather say there seldom has been in the past—much difficulty about assent to the Christian propositions. But what is more common in towns must be considered, and it is well to be prepared beforehand how to act when unbelief meets us on a death-bed. Three instances come to my mind, perhaps somewhat characteristic. Circumstances brought me to the sick-bed of a cultured man, whom I supposed to be a Unitarian, but hoped that he might have faith in our Lord. He seemed ready for prayer, and I said a simple act of faith, including a confession of the Incarnation. He said, "I cannot say that." I replied, "But you can say this," and made an act of faith in the Fatherhood of God, expressed submission to His will, and a desire to be taught. "Yes, I can say that," he said, and I said I hoped we might be allowed to talk of the other points when he was better. He recovered, and I induced him to read something, but he made no profession of belief. If he had wished for Holy Communion, I must have acted as I was led to act on another occasion. I received a message that a young man, whom I had not seen, but who had been visited by a friend, and of whom I had heard that he had doubts, was at the point of death and wished for Holy Communion. I was left alone with him, and asked

him, "Do you believe in the Incarnation?" "I fear not," he replied; "I don't think I believe in any miracles." I said, "You are too ill for me to argue with you, but I am sure God is willing to give you the gift of faith, if you ask for it. Would you like to do so?" He said he should like to ask, and I knelt down and prayed in the simplest way that the gift might be given him. When I stood up he said that it was given him. I then said, "If God has given you this, perhaps He will give you more. If you are sorry for your sins, and trust that they are forgiven for Jesus Christ's sake, I have power to tell you that they are forgiven, if you will tell them to me." Thereupon he made his confession, and I fetched what was needed and gave him Holy Communion. He lived in peaceful possession of what had been granted him for about a fortnight.

May I add a third recollection, because concrete instances have a certain power? Sitting by a young man of about twenty, in a humbler position of life, dying of consumption, I said, "Your faith in our Lord remains firm?" His reply showed that the question had been needed: "I pray more to God than I do to Jesus." I said, "Someone in the hospital" (where he had lately been) "has been talking to you." "Yes," he said, "there was a man there." It did not seem best to elicit the unbelieving objections which he had heard, but

rather to give him one of the positive aids to faith, so I said, "Listen to this," and read him the fifty-third of Isaiah, adding that no one could deny that the passage had been turned into Greek long before the birth of Christ. The Gospel thus imbedded in the Old Testament was enough for him; he had no more troubles. If trials to faith are terrible when death seems near, it is also true that the awfulness of that approach seems to give an increased power to prayer, if we have the faith to use it.

From faith we pass to repentance, and here we are still dependent upon the Divine gifts. Let us be quite sure that however true it may be, that death is, as Dr. Pusey said, "almost a sacrament," yet it is a sacrament that can be misused or wasted. It is an altogether unwarrantable assumption that a dying person is always sincere. There is the more need to say so, because we so often meet with the superstition that the dying know infallibly what their future will be. This conviction, tending as it does to take the place of true faith and effect, has a deep root in the districts where Methodism has been a power, and is connected with the Calvinistic doctrine of assurance. If St. John wrote in his first epistle in order that Christians might be securely conscious of the possession of eternal life, it is not for us to deny, but rather to teach that

there is a form of Christian confidence which seems to transcend the statement about ourselves which, relying on the Divine pardon bestowed on sincerity and faith, we may dare to borrow from St. Paul: "I know nothing against myself, yet am I not hereby justified." But however true it may be that St. John points us to a height—not indeed beyond that which St. Paul himself had reached, but beyond that state of ordinary Christian experience which his words serve to describe—we must protest energetically against two mistakes with which our ministry will certainly make us familiar—the doctrine that such assurance is indefectible, and the doctrine that it is a necessary condition of pardon. Forgive me if I bring the actual condition of things before you by a gross and repellent instance. A poor old man, endeavouring to conform himself to the will of God, had a Dissenting son, who said to him, "Father, be you sure of heaven?" and when the old man confessed that he could not say "Yes," added at once, "Then you be sure of hell." The counterpart of that rash word is found in the fatal hypocrisy it tends to produce. A priest stood at the foot of the bed of a woman who thought herself dying. She was excited, and cried out repeatedly, "Jesus is waiting for me." He stood silent. Presently she said to him, "I don't think you have faith to believe

it. Surely *you* ought to have faith." "I don't believe it," he said, "any the more for hearing you say it like that." There was, at the time, no relief of the situation. But she recovered, and admitted to him afterwards that the motive for her confident utterances was that she feared she was going to die, and that it would be said she had gone to hell. Her fear of public opinion after her death was much greater than her fear of the Divine judgment.

Repentance, then, must be something deeper than mere feeling, or the semblance of feeling. The desire to be less unworthy of the Divine promises, humble readiness to acknowledge sin, above all a desire for reparation and reconciliation, are surer grounds for hope than demonstrative and excited language.

The desire for reparation and reconciliation is connected with what I have called a right relation to the creatures of God. This phrase seems to include, and, in a manner, to explain, the rubrics which refer to charity, forgiveness, reparation, and disposal of property. Restoration of what has been gained by theft or fraud is, of course, a necessary condition of repentance, but it is to be noted that such restoration does not include self-accusation unless another person is suffering under suspicion of the theft. The value of what has been stolen may be sent anonymously to the

owner. Forgiveness of injuries is sometimes the last hindrance to a perfect repentance. In view of the teaching of our Lord this duty cannot be set aside, but its requirements need not be exaggerated. When we receive the Divine forgiveness, some results of our sin are not at once obliterated, and the love for my neighbour who has wronged me, which is the essence of forgiveness, does not require that I should desire to seek his company, unless it is necessary for his welfare.

I have already spoken of the place which private confession and absolution hold in the work of repentance. Many Churchpeople would be surprised to find how plainly the offer of this ministry is made part of the preparation of the faithful soul for death, and the strong language which is appointed to be used. But it is greatly to be observed in what position this offer stands. It comes apart from and subsidiary to the general requirement of repentance. I would earnestly plead that this distinct provision of the Church should not be looked upon either as a sort of luxury for well-instructed people, or as an exceptional remedy for rare sin. If our ministrations are really based on the Prayer Book, we shall not allow ourselves to be responsible for having prepared anyone either for Holy Communion or for death who is in ignorance of it.

It is my duty and privilege to bear witness that

in dealing with the rural poor I have seen it answer to need deeply felt. I ought, perhaps, to add that I have ministered to those whose penitence has been undoubted, and who did not wish for confession. I have known persons who have greatly valued it at some periods of their life, who have not needed it on their death-bed. Lastly, I feel sure that the honest and full teaching of confession to the priest, where it is needed, has brought home the necessity of confession to God in a way that it would not otherwise have been known. A saying of one who has now left Oxford has often been remembered there: "People may differ as to whether it is best for every one to go to confession, but there can be no doubt that, at certain times of a man's life, it is good for him to make such an examination of his sins as he would have to do if he were preparing for confession."

Thus the possible need of this personal discipline and acquittal completes, after faith, penitence, and the right use of persons and things, the points on which the soul must be self-examined, when membership with Christ is sought and claimed. This is the process by which the children of the Church are to be brought to a well-grounded peace. Certain verses of the appropriate seventy-first Psalm, with a solemn form of benediction, are added. Is it accidental that the prescribed portion of the Psalm ends at the nine-

teenth verse, and leaves, as if for use by the soul, after it has been relieved from the burden of the flesh, the remarkable concluding verses of the same Psalm? "O what great troubles and adversities hast thou shewed me! and yet didst thou turn and refresh me, yea, and broughtest me from the deep of the earth again. Thou hast brought me to great honour, and comforted me on every side. . . . My lips will be fain when I sing unto Thee: and so will my soul whom thou hast delivered."

Lastly, the Communion of the Sick has its place as the end to which the Order of Visitation should lead. I do not forget the difficulties which would be met by free permission to give communion with the Holy Sacrament consecrated in Church; but this is likely to be exceptional for some time to come, and I would rather invite you to accept the testimony of country experience as to certain benefits arising from the celebration of the holy mysteries in the homes of the poor. Something depends upon the pains taken in the matter. It is of great advantage to use the same vessels that are used in church; the pocket communion vessels are undignified and unfamiliar. The efforts of poor people to make their cottages as worthy as may be of the supreme act of worship and blessing reflect benefit on those who make them. If the sick person is very weak, it may be

well to take advantage of the permission of the rubric, and to celebrate in a fit place in the house other than the sick-room. If the Holy Sacrament is taken from this room to the sick-chamber, it will be well to say the confession, absolution, and prayer of Humble Access before the administration, a place having been prepared for the deposition of the Holy Sacrament while the prayers are said. The rubric requires that the sick person shall receive last. If this is pointed out to him beforehand, there will be no danger of jarring surprise at the sacred moment; the recitation by the priest of a familiar hymn while he prepares the oblation, and between the necessary acts of consumption and ablution at the end of the service, will often give great pleasure to the sick. So great and sacred a consecration of the dwelling may be made an opportunity of blessing for many more than the one person whose need has brought it about.

Sickness and death, visitation and funerals, are among the recurring opportunities which break in upon the monotony of country life. A solemn funeral, in which no pains have been spared to minister through mourning and consolation to the spirit of man, is often the occasion of a revival of spiritual life in one or more souls.

I should be omitting one of the greatest opportunities of blessing which I have seen in country

work if I did not remind you of the possibilities of a parochial mission in the country. There is no case, I think, where a new ecclesiastical development has so wonderfully coincided with the wants of people. To give the time and pains needed for the attendance at Church daily for from ten to fifteen days is an effort that country people are not unwilling to make. Nothing succeeds like success, and on the wave of a large attendance, nearly the whole parish, certainly many who are only occasional attendants, are swept into the church. The difficulty of coming back to church after a long absence is very great for an individual in a state of society where all acts are observed and talked of, but in a village mission, which has been duly prepared for, the exceptional person will be one of the few, the very few, who have taken no part in it.

Certainly I ought to say that a most signal blessing from Almighty God has rested on the introduction of missions into country parishes. Such a blessing has been sought, and always must be sought, by special prayer. Neither the parish priest himself, nor the missioner whom he consults, can venture to say, without prayer and counsel, when the mission ought to be. The opinion which takes shape in the body of the communicants after they have, at their pastor's request, prayed for guidance; the decision or advice of the bishop; circumstances in the history of the parish which

designate a particular moment, all these things work together to show when it is the will of God to give some touch of prophetic power to the work of His Church in a particular place. When the time has been fixed, the next duty of priest and people is to draw down the Divine blessing at that particular time. The missioner ought to be able to adopt the sacred words, and say, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." This can indeed be said in a true and real sense while the world lasts, and while this or that soul is still on the probation of the earthly pilgrimage; but the words may mean much more than this. If, at a suggestion which we trust is from on high, we have united to take the kingdom of heaven by violence, we are able to say confidently that days of the mission will be the days of special blessing, because for them a special blessing has been asked.

Following the Divine plan in the preparation for the great advent of our Saviour, it should be our endeavour to kindle a feeling of expectation before the mission comes. Special prayer should be offered for its success at every opportunity of united supplication, as far as possible in every house. The church workers will probably be invited to meet the missioner to receive the instructions he may be led to give some months before he arrives for his chief work. For a whole year, if possible, the ordinary preaching on the recurring

seasons of the Church should have the mission in view, and be coloured by it. The parish priest and his assistants should endeavour privately, or in counsel between themselves, to form some approximate idea of the spiritual state and needs of every person in their flock. Hindrances should be as far as possible removed. The church, the school, the parsonage should all be brought to the highest possible readiness and fitness for the work. One of those to whom the beginning of missions in the Church of England is chiefly due, said, "The parish clergy must lay the fire; we only come and put the match to it." But those who laid the fire must tend it, both while the flame is getting hold of the prepared materials, and when the fire, no longer in its beginnings, needs to be cherished. While the mission sermons are being preached, the parish clergy should be moving among the people, both in church and throughout the parish, encouraging perseverance, moving to prayer, bringing the people into personal contact with the missioners. When the mission is over a special character will be given to the parochial work in the year that follows, no less than in that which preceded the mission. I must not forget that I may be, if God give me the privilege, speaking not only to those who will organize missions as parish priests, but to those who will themselves be missioners. As I have already

ventured to say, the pastoral work must be set above mission work, but mission work requires the more unusual gifts, and the more special outward action. Let me add that in our foreign missions, which no doubt rank highest of all, the missioner soon becomes the pastor also.

The object of the missioner must be to bring every soul in the parish into a right relation to our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to do this, unbelief, apathy, and hostility must be fought with every weapon that can be devised; much more, the personal action of our Lord must be set before those whom we can reach by every means in our power. If I dare to speak of what I have tried in days gone by, I should wish to say that those scenes in the Gospels which show simple souls in personal contact with our Lord are the most powerful means of conversion. But results beyond any that I have known have come from striking analysis of the soul's needs and experiences from a series of scriptural pictures of sin, forgiveness, and blessing, as well as from the detailed preaching of the Passion of our Lord.

If I add another aspect under which a mission may, as it seems to me, be regarded, I would say that it may be called an attempt to bring into a brief compass the whole teaching of the Christian religion. In saying this I know that I am saying what will not be approved by some of the greater

missioners. And I am well aware that the pure mission preaching which does not go beyond the first relation of the soul to Christ has been greatly blessed. I cannot, however, forget what a splendid opportunity the interest of the mission offers to set before our people the coherence of Christian doctrine. It is because they are taught in isolation, and apart from their place in the sequence of revealed truth, that various true doctrines have to meet a prejudice which never ought to have been raised against them, and I cannot forget that it was a London mission which gave to the Church so valuable a statement of doctrine as that contained in Dr. Mason's "Faith of the Gospel."

Moreover, I cannot but feel sure that every part of revealed truth may be used for quickening the powers of some soul, and I know how powerfully the doctrines of God and of creation have acted in the conviction of sin.

If I am addressing anyone who has heard in his heart the call to mission work, I would ask him to remember that it is a call to the goodly fellowship of the prophets and to the fellowship of their sufferings. The reactions of joy and sorrow, the keenest of disappointments, the most surprising and often the fiercest temptations, linked to very trying experiences in body and in brain—these are what the missioner has to expect. For him, then, beyond others, but for all with him, the last

special opportunity which I will specially mention comes to supply his need: I mean the opportunity of retreat. From the highest point of view it has been said that while a mission is God drawing near to men, a retreat is men drawing near to God. In its outward form, a retreat is chiefly marked by silence, leading to prayer. That prayer extends itself beyond the Eucharist and the Daily Offices to the recitation of the 119th Psalm in the intervals marked by the lesser Hours, and by as many as three meditations in the day. To help these meditations, addresses are usually given by a conductor, who acts as the pastor of the retreat, and is at the service of those who take part in it for counsel or confession. But the special ministry of such a conductor ought not to be regarded as of the essence of a retreat. Silence, sustained prayer, waiting upon the will of God, these are the essential features for which a sacrifice of time is so well worth making.

Whoever is called to the exciting and trying work of missions specially needs retreat. But not he alone. It may startle a country priest working alone through the year to find himself telling his people that it is part of our Lord's will for them that each one should know his pastor. "Who is *my* pastor?" he may ask. And, for certain, to find himself for three or four brief but blessed days in the position of listening and praying alone

instead of speaking and leading the prayers of others, is one of the best helps to remind a man that the saving of his own soul is no selfish forgetfulness of his office, but the surest road to its fulfilment. It has been one of the best developments of what has been so greatly blessed, that the retreat is no longer the mark of clerical life, but that it is used by lay people of all kinds, and is especially part of the preparation for Holy Orders. For many years, if I am not mistaken, an annual retreat for undergraduates in this University, as at Oxford, has been a great blessing to a small number, who have met for it on some week-days in vacation.

May I venture to record our recent experience at Oxford, that a larger number of men have been led to take part in a retreat which consists of only one clear day, and that the last Sunday in Term—a retreat which has not been conducted by a stranger, but by a well-known resident?

It has been a great happiness to feel that retreats have been extended from clerical use to that of the devout and leisured laity. But it is impossible to feel satisfied until those who have little leisure can share in them; and this last completion of their value has been secured to a large extent of late years by the paradoxical institution of Open Retreats. Addresses have been given and the Hours have been said for one or more

days in a parish church, and various members of the congregation have entered into them with varying degrees of strictness. If the retreat begins on a Sunday night, many of the busiest can be present again on Monday and Tuesday evenings, and for early communion and meditation on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday mornings, while during the daytime of Monday and Tuesday those with more leisure may be aided by supplementary addresses, deepening the teaching of the three evenings.

If I am not mistaken, opportunities of this kind ought to do much for us in the future. A mission is a greater thing, much more dependent upon special gifts and special movements of the Holy Spirit, which may be prayed for and waited for, but are not ordinarily at our disposal. The open retreat, or parochial retreat, may have much of the outward machinery of a mission, but differs from it in being addressed chiefly to those within the Church. It favours two lines of action, which I am sure must be much in your minds, when the service of the Church of England shall have passed from the generation to which I belong to that succession of hope and blessing on which you are to enter. First, you will have to learn that what is possible for the Church is not to be co-extensive with the nation, but to cherish a faithful minority who may be the salt of the nation.

Secondly, you will have to review the parochial system. You will have to limit the power and the tenure of the incumbent by the freer action of the Bishop, and you will co-ordinate the power of the Bishop with that of the Synod and the Province. The parochial retreat of the future will draw the bands of union closer between the communicants, and, under episcopal sanction, will gather the faithful of a neighbourhood for common worship and fellowship. If the Bishop appoints the conductor, there will be less need for a constant supply of strangers from a distance. Parochial isolation will be relieved, and an interchange of gifts and service will increase the efficiency of all. The country parish is being drawn for civil purposes more and more within the attraction of common centres. What is done for sanitation and education will gradually be done for religion, and the dangerous monotony which has made the word *parochial* almost a synonym for *narrow* and *ineffective*, will not only be relieved, as it may be now, by your seizure of opportunities for the promotion of elasticity and life, but will only remain as an element of stability in a system in which the old and the new may be harmonized by the infinite variety of the operation of the Spirit of God.

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